



University of Kentucky
UKnowledge

Theses and Dissertations--Hispanic Studies

Hispanic Studies

2015

For the Love of Robots: Posthumanism in Latin American Science Fiction Between 1960-1999

Grace A. Martin

University of Kentucky, gamartin01@gmail.com

[Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.](#)

Recommended Citation

Martin, Grace A., "For the Love of Robots: Posthumanism in Latin American Science Fiction Between 1960-1999" (2015). *Theses and Dissertations--Hispanic Studies*. 21.
https://uknowledge.uky.edu/hisp_etds/21

This Doctoral Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Hispanic Studies at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations--Hispanic Studies by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@sv.uky.edu.

STUDENT AGREEMENT:

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student's advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student's thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

Grace A. Martin, Student

Dr. Enrico Mario Santí, Major Professor

Dr. Moisés Castillo, Director of Graduate Studies

FOR THE LOVE OF ROBOTS:
POSTHUMANISM IN LATIN AMERICAN SCIENCE
FICTION BETWEEN 1960-1999

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

Grace A. Martin

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Enrico Mario Santí, William T. Bryan Professor of Hispanic Studies

Lexington, Kentucky

2015

Copyright © Grace A. Martin 2015

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

FOR THE LOVE OF ROBOTS: POSTHUMANISM IN LATIN AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION BETWEEN 1960-1999

Posthumanism—understood as a symbiotic relationship between humans and technology—is quickly and surely becoming an inextricable part of daily life. In an era where technology can be worn as an extension of—and an enhancement to—our bodies, traditional science fiction tropes such as robots and cyborgs resurface and reformulate questions on critical aspects of human experience: who are we and what do our (imagined) technologies say about our world? Such questions are far more complex than they appear. Their answers should not come from one source alone, as humanness is experienced differently across time and cultural systems. In this sense, it is imperative to focus critical attention on works beyond the English-language canon in order to discover alternative readings of the posthuman, understand how varying historical, social, and economic contexts give new meanings to robots, cyborgs and hyper-technological imaginaries, and provide balancing perspectives to the ideas presented in canon posthuman science fiction from the developed world.

To this end, this study centers on posthuman science fiction from Latin America. The primary works included here are limited only to Mexico, Chile, and Argentina—three of the countries with the greatest science fiction output in the region. This study explores the intersections of gender, sexualities, and posthumanism, as well as the underlying sociopolitical implications of such narratives. They exhibit an undeniable influence of canon Anglophone science fiction in terms of tropes (robots as mates for humans, cybernetic doppelgangers, technological utopias and dystopias) as well as problematic representations of gender, sex, and race. Yet, at the same time, posthuman elements in these Latin American narratives exhibit distinct local traits. Moreover, robot and cyborg figures enhance and renew discourses of political corruption, dictatorial trauma, surveillance, social and ecological decline. This study aims to outline the ways in which Latin American posthuman science fiction stands apart from the canon and proves itself as a legitimate genre. Simultaneously, this project seeks to supplement the nascent critical corpus on Latin American science fiction. It is my hope that this study's insights will contribute to the field's growth and success with scholars and readers alike.

KEYWORDS: Posthumanism, Robots, Cyborgs,
Gender and Sexualities, Surveillance.

Grace A. Martin

Student's Signature

March 9, 2015

Date

FOR THE LOVE OF ROBOTS:
POSTHUMANISM IN LATIN AMERICAN SCIENCE
FICTION BETWEEN 1960-1999

By

Grace A. Martin

Dr. Enrico Mario Santí

Director of Dissertation

Dr. Moisés Castillo

Director of Graduate Studies

March 9, 2015

Date

To Chris, Joseph Haydn, and coffee.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At the end of one of my life's greatest journeys, I am filled with gratitude for many people without whom this project may have never come to fruition. My dissertation director, Dr. Enrico Mario Santí, has been an exceptional mentor. His unconditional support, encouragement, guidance, and sense of humor have made a great difference. I am especially grateful for his invaluable academic insights and stylistic suggestions, which have enhanced my research and allowed my writing to evolve. I would also like to thank Dr. Yanira Paz, whose kindness, patience, and advice have motivated me to persevere in the pursuit of my professional goals in academia. I am equally thankful for Dr. Susan Larson's thoughtful feedback and support, as well as the cordial helpfulness of Dr. Cristina Alcalde. Both of them witnessed my work in its earliest stages, and I am glad to share with them what ultimately came from the overly-enthusiastic "robot" thesis proposal they once read. I would like to extend my thanks to Dr. Armando Prats, who joined us in the last leg of this journey with reassuring enthusiasm. I am as happy as I am honored to have worked with all of them.

As I wrote my dissertation, I remained (somewhat) sane and conquered many challenges thanks to my wonderful family. My amazing husband, Chris Martin, was always doubtless that I could reach my goal and instilled that confidence in my often-doubtful self. His loving words and gestures encourage me to rally and go forth no matter what obstacles lay ahead. My mother-in-law, Janet Martin, is one of the strongest, kindest people I know and her fortitude inspired me in the most arduous times of my writing process. Finally, the biggest thanks goes to my parents, Vicente Rhenals and Rubiela Vélez, who taught me to value knowledge above all and provide me with endless love and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	iii
List of Figures	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction: The Singularity is Near, to the South	1
Preface.....	1
Introduction	2
The Latin American Singularity: A Case for Regional Posthuman Science Fiction.....	6
Robots in Time and Space: Regional and Temporal Considerations	9
Robots in Theory.....	13
Cybernetic Body Parts: Dissertation Structure	21
Final Considerations.....	24
Chapter 2: Fembots Fatales.....	26
“Minerva”: Of Domestic Goddesses and Drag Performances	29
<i>Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros</i> , indeed.	44
“Samantha”: Clone Nightmares in Suburbia	66
Chapter Conclusion.....	75
Chapter 3: Romancing the Android.....	80
Of Servants, Doubles, and Family Troubles: “Bil Tu”.....	82
Vicarious Heroism via Posthumanism: <i>Flores para un cyborg</i>	100
Juana + La cibernética:	124
Virtual Love, Actual Hate, and Human Disconnection in Gorodischer	136
Chapter Conclusion	150
Chapter 4: Social Cyborgs and Cyborg Societies	156
Taking Justice Into Your Own Robotic Hands: <i>Flores para un cyborg</i>	158
The Circle of Despair: Environmental Apocalypse in <i>Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros</i>	169
Pills, Noises, and Brave New Big Brothers: A Segue	181
Happy Little Pills: Medicated Happiness and Cyborgification in Jorge Cubría’s “Pastillas de felicidad”	183
Unending Transmission: “Ruido gris” by Pepe Rojo.....	198
The Internet is Where Robots Go to Heaven: “Padre Chip” by Jorge Cubría	219
Chapter Conclusion.....	238
Chapter 5: General Conclusion	244
Works Cited	259

Vita	275
------------	-----

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. An illustration from “Pastillas de felicidad”	192
---	-----

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Singularity is Near, to the South

Preface

This dissertation will focus on Latin American posthuman science fiction between 1960 and 1999. Its specific subject is posthuman figures—robots, cyborgs, intelligent machines—and how these express gender, sexualities, and sociopolitical issues through technological embodiment. Although Latin American science fiction production began decades before our chosen timeframe, the 1960s marked a dramatic increase in publishing rates, thus propelling the genre's spread. Texts published after the year 2000 are, due to thematic differences prompted by the advent of the Internet, beyond the scope of this dissertation. Latin American science fiction—posthuman and otherwise—has not yet achieved massive popularity locally or internationally. Nonetheless, countless texts in the genre, many of which deserve greater critical attention, continue to be published. Latin American posthuman scifi, in particular, has remained largely ignored. Thus, this dissertation will explore select posthuman texts in order to identify overarching themes and unique traits in this Latin American science fiction variety.

The dissertation will be divided in three main chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 will engage directly with posthuman gender and sexualities. Our study of gendered robots and cyborg characters aims to address issues of human emotional attachment to posthuman figures, the effects of technology on relationships as well as the incidence of traditional gender and sexualities. Chapter 4 deals with posthuman social and political implications: social memory and amnesia, Latin American political histories, State and corporate surveillance in panoptical societies, and social participation aided by technology.

The narratives in this dissertation, from four decades and three countries, are of course a mere sample of the extensive, fascinating corpus of Latin American posthuman science fiction. This study aims to demonstrate that, despite its obscurity, this is a genre that can stand on its own and has much to offer, both locally and internationally.

Introduction

The human race is cyborg. From our vaccines to the technology that has become second nature, we employ peripherals, prostheses, enhancements, upgrades, complements. The tools we create, the substances we consume, even the preventive measures we take are not inherent, but rather add-ons that help us cope and achieve. Without them, we could not survive. And yet, at the same time, the very world we have built inevitably calls for our self-enhancement. We keep making buildings taller, roads longer, work more complex. We need technology—be it in the form of medicine, infrastructure, or even leisure—in order to survive in the increasingly complicated reality we have weaved for ourselves. We struggle to keep up yet yearn to move forward, to continue raising the stakes, and to reach potentials beyond our potential. There is always more. Or is there? Perhaps human nature can never be satisfied. We crave evolution and we produce it ourselves, artificially. From the moment we chose to make and wear clothes instead of waiting for our bodies to develop them, we became cyborgs.

I am not alone in believing that the posthuman has always been part of being human. Darin Barney, for example, explains the development of modern technology as the inevitable product of an inherently *Promethean* society, which “blindly [wields] instruments to command and transcend that which is given, in the hope of creating its own future” (Barney 6). Futurists believe, similarly, that humans distinguish themselves

from other species through compulsory, often technological self-enhancement.¹ Some, like Ray Kurzweil, contend that the rate and speed of these very practices are increasing exponentially, thus leading to a not-too-distant cyborg future. Kurzweil dubs such a prospect *the Singularity*, a point in the future where technological development will be fast and impactful enough to alter the course of human evolution. This change will be so significant, Kurzweil adds, that it will lead to an inexorable merger of organic physiology and cybernetic parts. After human and artificial intelligence become one and new, the Singularity will continue growing exponentially² until the universe itself achieves intelligence and self-awareness (7, 9). Kurzweil, however, asserts that humanness will not disappear with the advent of the Singularity. Instead, a crucial aspect of human nature must remain intact in order to sustain the Singularity: “ours is the species that inherently seeks to extend the physical and mental reach beyond current limitations” (Kurzweil 9). Even when biological boundaries are transcended, the human need for self-enhancement will—and must, perhaps,—remain. And yet, that very trait appears to be the harbinger of a posthuman, cybernetic era. What makes us human is also what makes us cyborg, a contradictory destiny we cannot seem to escape. With nowhere to run, there is no choice but to move forward, as we always do.

Moving forward, nonetheless, requires change. Processes such as evolution, often used as models in futurist theories like Kurzweil’s, are based on pattern deviations. Ideas cannot

¹ Kurzweil suggests that “This is one aspect of the uniqueness of our species: our intelligence is just sufficiently above the critical threshold necessary for us to scale our own ability to unrestricted heights of creative power—and we have the opposable appendage (our thumbs) necessary to manipulate the universe to our will” (4)

² Kurzweil explains this through his Law of Accelerating Returns: “Key measures of capability (such as price, performance, bandwidth, and capacity) increase by multiples (that is, the measures are multiplied by a factor for each increment of time) rather than being added to linearly” (498). In other words, the technological development rate becomes increasingly faster over time rather than remaining a constant.

evolve if they remain static and unchallenged. This has certainly been the case with the Singularity and similar posthuman concepts, which are viewed with equal wonder and skepticism. Cornelis Pieters argues that cyber-human futures and universal intelligence are both impractical and unlikely, due to the interference of factors external to isolated scientific speculation, yet fundamental to human experience: politics, economic models, social norms, among many (368). Such factors may stunt the exponentially-accelerated growth of technological development required to produce the Singularity, Pieters asserts. Moreover, he adds, assuming that technology will grow exponentially, without encountering barriers, is a reductionist view, and reductionism is always problematic (Pieters 368). Seidensticker is also unconvinced by Kurzweil's Singularity. Unlike Cornelis, Seidensticker counters Kurzweil's theory by arguing that digital technologies, such as computers and the internet, are far less crucial to humanity than the "older" technologies (such as electricity, telephones, and agriculture), which have stood the test of time (Seidensticker ix). He asserts that newness should not be conflated with usefulness³:

³ Although this appears to be a reasonable claim, Seidensticker's supporting evidence unravels if we consider the technological changes—and their ensuing alterations to daily life—that have occurred in the nine years since his direct rebuttal to Kurzweil, *Future Hype*, was published. For example, many of the industries and practices Seidensticker cites as "old technologies" (and, under his own logic, pits against digital developments or "new technologies") have become engulfed by the digital over the past decade. Written works are increasingly distributed in digital format, leading to the obsolescence—and, often, bankruptcy—of bookstores. Electricity has become intertwined with wifi internet and enhanced by it, producing so-called "smart homes." Digital cartography, aided by GPS technologies, is displacing its physical counterpart in the form of electronic maps and navigation, and the data collection for mapping is now commonly executed by robotic cars without human drivers, guided by internet and satellite communications. As for weapons, consider how the aforementioned GPS may increase the accuracy of missiles. Moreover, new forms of weaponry have emerged in the digital era, namely cyber-attacks against governments, corporations, and citizens alike. Seidensticker was certainly naïve to assume that "the internet isn't that big a deal [and] neither is the PC" (ix).

if we go even further back, we see the fundamental developments on which society is based: agriculture, metallurgy, the beginnings of engineering, writing, textiles, transportation, timekeeping, basic tools and weapons, and so on. Are today's products really so amazing compared to those on which they were built? Too often we mistake a new technology for an important one (Seidensticker 5).

Evidently, Kurzweil's provocative statements on technology's speed and growth have raised many questions and responses. What matters here is not the alignment of the resulting viewpoints, but rather the dialectic that develops between supporters and opponents of posthuman visions of the future such as the Singularity. The exchanges between all sides of this conversation add to the complexity of posthuman considerations while simultaneously keeping prominent perspectives, such as Kurzweil's, in check.

Posthumanism, then, appears to be increasingly relevant. The progressive union of humanity and technology is already evident in many fields, and its impact promises to extend beyond science alone: "this impending Singularity in our future is increasingly transforming every institution and aspect of human life, from sexuality to spirituality" (Kurzweil 7). Posthumanism's transformative power is especially visible in science fiction, where it has long served as a vehicle to examine humanity's past, present, and future. This genre defines humanness and its significance—be it ontological, biological, or even spiritual—through a natural selection process of sorts. The human traits that survive the transition into posthumanism may be considered valid markers of humanness, while those that do not may not. But aye, there's the rub: Which are the exact human traits that will endure this evolution? Although we are referring to science *fiction*—not *fact*—it is worth noting that the imaginations of authors are inevitably informed by their

own realities. It is hardly surprising, then, that regional and historical contexts influence authors' choices rather significantly. For instance, English-language science fiction tends to favor intelligence and self-awareness as unequivocally human traits that signal humanness in posthuman figures such as robots and cyborgs. Conversely, science fiction in Latin America relies more often on characteristics such as gender and sexuality to mark posthuman characters as (almost) human. Moreover, posthuman science fiction interrogates social and political issues differently depending on authors' national contexts. Certain posthuman representations and reflections that are relevant in canonical science fiction may be inoperative in regional versions of the genre with unique cultural circumstances. For this reason, it is imperative to study posthuman science fiction outside the canon. The latter, despite receiving considerable critical attention, often comes from the developed world and is, thus, limited only to the experiences and issues in that setting. If posthumanism aims to define what it means to be human, then it must account for *all* ways to be human—including those that are not at the center.

The Latin American Singularity: A Case for Regional Posthuman Science Fiction

Kurzweil asserts that evolution in all its forms—including the Singularity—depends on patterns: “Evolution is a process of creating patterns of increasing order [...] it’s the evolution of patterns that constitutes the ultimate story of our world” (Kurzweil 14). While evolution does rely on repeating structures to ensure the sustainability of life forms and systems, it is deviation—not recurrence—that prompts forward movement into the next evolutionary stage. In this sense, posthuman science fiction as we know it can be read as an organism structured by the patterns the canon has established thus far. These provide the genre with shape and distinctness, but have limited growth potential on their

own. Therefore, some literary mutations must occur in order to produce new configurations that will make posthuman science fiction more complex, richer, and stronger as a genre.

Despite its relative obscurity, Latin American posthuman science fiction holds the potential to help global science fiction evolve. There is a surprisingly varied literary corpus on robots, cyborgs, and human-technology confluences in the region, where various cultural products express a distinct fascination with all things cybernetic. Literature envisions humanoid robots that will serve as companions, lovers, religious leaders, and work partners for humans in the not-too-distant future. Several Latin American narratives also imagine futures where cybernetic enhancements will become commonplace for humans, all spaces and activities will be inextricably tied to digital technologies, and these very advances will herald changes in all fields, from politics and the economy to sexuality and spirituality. In visual media, films explore the effects of cyborgification and technological commodification of the human body vis-à-vis political issues such as the U.S.-Mexico border conflict⁴. Additionally, robots and cyborgs have begun to appear regularly in Latin American music videos. Puerto Rican reggaeton singer Don Omar has released two robot-themed singles and corresponding videos in the past, titled “Diva virtual” and “Sexy robótica” respectively⁵. Similarly, the music video for “Bebé bonita” by Venezuelan tropical duo “Chino y Nacho” features a female robot. The

⁴ Alex Rivera’s film *Sleep Dealer* (2008) illustrates this perfectly. Because the scope of this dissertation is limited only to novels and short stories, I will not study Rivera’s film. However, I hope to explore his work in future research projects.

⁵ Don Omar’s lyrics reference posthumanism overtly: “tiene dentro esa chispa que quema transistores y bebe de un elixir que enciende sus motores” [...] “tiene algo de robot en su táctica, me agotó la batería su técnica. Su modelo vino con cintura plástica, con los movimientos de la mujer biónica” (“Diva virtual”). In addition, the singer uses the pseudonym “iDon” in both videos, situating himself as a posthuman subject within his musical and visual narratives.

attractive fembot protagonist falls from the skies *à la* Terminator, tracks down the musical duo using her cyber-vision, and alters her physique digitally to fit each singer's desire parameters.

Indeed, posthuman science fiction appears to be quite popular in Latin America. This is not a recent development: Latin American science fiction has been produced continuously for over a century. Nonetheless, technology's allure appears to have grown in strength and reach over the past several decades. Inevitably, one must ask why a region such as Latin America, which has never led industrial or technological production worldwide, is so infatuated with technology and science fiction. It could be argued that technology is a status symbol, and human-cybernetic fusions epitomize the embodiment of a desirable (high) socioeconomic status⁶. Hence the recurrence of posthumanism in popular media such as reggaeton videos. There, robots and cyborgs serve the same purpose as gold chains, luxury vehicles, and expensive champagne—they symbolize economic development, wealth. Alternatively, the increasing popularity of posthumanist science fiction could be interpreted as a radical departure from tropes and genres that are traditionally associated with (and expected of) Latin America. The wild, the magical-realist “Macondoland,” the rural, the raw—the *human*—find an antithesis in the *posthuman*. There is no “profundo sentir” for robots. The future, instead, is hyper-urban, technological, filled with numbness rather than emotional extremes—whatever may have been “passionate,” so to speak, about Latin America becomes extinct in posthuman

⁶ Santí suggests that robots are not the only iconic fantasy characters used as capitalist symbols in recent cultural products. Zombies, he asserts, constitute an antithesis to robots: the “living dead” are “symbols of a culture (late capitalism?) that looks to the past rather than the future.”

science fiction. This genre may appeal to Latin American authors as an opportunity to leave literary comfort zones, produce innovative texts, and offer new insights.

It is worth asking, however, if Latin American posthuman sci-fi authors do, indeed, achieve such lofty goals. Do regional versions of the genre truly contribute with novel forms and ideas, or do they limit themselves to following the canon with blind faithfulness? Some overlapping between the two is expected—patterns, as Kurzweil observes, provide stability and consistency—yet repetition alone would not have any effect on posthuman science fiction globally. Moreover, does Latin American posthuman sci-fi distinguish itself as a legitimate genre among all Latin American literary traditions? This dissertation will address these questions in an effort to reach two goals. First, this project aims to determine if Latin American posthuman science fiction is effective and unique enough to produce a “literary mutation” that could *upgrade* global science fiction into a more inclusive, complex genre. Second, this study seeks to supplement the nascent critical corpus on Latin American science fiction. Scholars such as Yolanda Molina-Gavilán, Andrea Bell, and J. Andrew Brown began to lay the foundations for study of this field only since the early to mid-2000s. There are still many aspects of the genre to be studied. Posthumanism, in particular, has remained largely unexplored except for the work of few. It is my hope that this study’s insights will contribute to the field’s growth and success with scholars and readers alike, within and outside of Latin America.

Robots in Time and Space: Regional and Temporal Considerations

This dissertation will cover several Latin American posthuman science fiction narratives published between 1960 and 1999. This period choice derives from two main factors: regional science fiction production rates, and the pre and post-internet literary schism. As

scholars of the genre have previously indicated, Latin American science fiction literature began well before the twentieth century, yet its continuous, consistent production started closer to 1960⁷ (Bell 1999: 441, Molina-Gavilán 6, Molina-Gavilán et al 374). From this point forward, studies have documented three main trends in the evolution of Latin American science fiction. First, the 1960s constituted a period of speculative science fiction that, motivated in part by the “space race” between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, drew heavily from English-language canonical works and pulp scifi (Bell 1999:441-42, Molina-Gavilán et al 373, 377). Then, a new type of science fiction emerged with the installment of authoritarian regimes in various Latin American nations in the 1970s and 1980s. Self-censorship and avoidance of political topics prevailed during this period (Bell 1999: 442, Molina-Gavilán et al 375, 382, 387). Nonetheless, it is worth noting that this did not prevent science fiction authors from focusing on less politically-charged yet relevant themes, such as gender norms, sexualities, and women’s rights, as we will observe in this study. Finally, the 1990s mark a striking departure from self-censorship in favor of open, sometimes abrasive commentary on State abuse, political corruption, and social decline (Bell 1999: 443, Molina-Gavilán et al 374). No longer afraid of State retaliation, Latin American scifi authors critique bureaucratic ineptitude, the impunity of totalitarian regimes, rampant capitalism, as well as social and ecological decline. The fearless sociopolitical engagement in Latin American posthuman science fiction from this period will be especially evident in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, which explores texts

⁷ Select posthuman narratives predating this period, such as Ladislao Holmberg’s “Horacio Kalibang o los autómatas” (1879) and Adolfo Bioy Casares’ *La invención de Morel* (1940), are renowned but ultimately remain beyond the scope of this dissertation.

exclusively from the 1990s decade and highlights themes that were either absent or heavily masked in our studied narratives prior to that era.

The advent of the internet has had multiple effects on (posthuman) science fiction production in Latin America. From its inception near 1990, it has propelled the distribution of Latin American science fiction through electronic fanzines, online self-publishing, and listserves (Bell 1999: 444-45). Online distribution has also mitigated the lack of support from traditional publishers that the scifi genre has experienced in countries like Perú and Chile (Molina-Gavilán et al 380, 387). Perhaps most importantly, the internet has changed the way science fiction is written. This has been especially evident in posthuman narratives. Robots and cyborgs do not appear to be singular, individual, self-contained entities from this point forward. Instead, there is a proliferation of narratives that focus on cyber-human collectivity, connectivity, globalization, democratic participation, and resistance born from the presence of network technologies. Evidently, this marks an entirely new period for (posthuman) science fiction that deserves (and could effortlessly encompass) an entire dissertation of its own. For this reason, this project will only focus on pre-internet posthuman narratives from Latin America. The only exception is Jorge Cubría's 1996 story "Padre Chip." I have deliberately included this text for two reasons. First, it serves as a complement to "Pastillas de felicidad", an earlier narrative by Cubría also considered in this study. Second, it is an effective transitional piece that introduces Latin American perspectives on the effects of connectedness and network technologies on the meanings of citizenship, social participation, identity, and individuality.

As most scholarship on Latin American science fiction asserts, the problem with the genre is not the amount of existing works, but rather their obscurity and lack of critical and public attention. The situation is no different for posthuman science fiction in the region, whose production is vast, yet extremely uneven in terms of quality and seldom studied. Because there is such a large, disparate array of works in the posthuman genre, I will focus only on select narratives from Mexico, Chile, and Argentina. These are, along with Cuba and Brazil, the countries with the largest science fiction output in Latin America since the 1950s. Although each of these nations has experienced unique political and cultural histories, their science fiction narratives share several key points in common. Authors across all time periods encompassed in this study write robot and cyborg characters in strikingly similar ways, especially female posthuman figures. Avoidance of political themes, lack of distinct national markers, yet abundant critiques of gender and sexualities are consistent in authors from these countries during the 1970s and early 1980s due to overlapping totalitarian and/or oppressive political contexts. Similarly, open critiques of State institutions and social issues are as common for the North as they are for the South in texts from the 1990s considered in this study. While posthuman science fiction is also prolific in Cuba and especially Brazil⁸ within this study's time frame, the

⁸ The posthuman tradition in Brazilian science fiction literature is as vast as it is complex. Molina-Gavilan et al assert that "robots and computers emerge as vehicles to criticize class, race, and gender prejudice" and "cyborgs tend to reflect the Brazilian incorporation of technology into the Brazilian body politic" (383). Many Brazilian authors such as Henrique Flory, Ivan Carlos Regina, Marcia Kuptsas, Alfredo Sirkis, and Cid Fernandez appear to have forged a solid Brazilian posthuman tradition by engaging directly and significantly with robots, cyborgs, and the increasing human dependence on computers and artificial intelligence (Molina-Gavilán et al 383). Although Brazil's political history and totalitarian past may overlap with the science fiction contexts considered in this dissertation, the voluminous posthuman scifi corpus from that country calls for a study of its own.

historical and political contexts of these countries are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nonetheless, they will be considered in future research projects.

Robots in Theory

Latin American Science Fiction Studies

Despite its inception before the twentieth century, Latin American scifi has only garnered scholarly attention recently. Studies by Yolanda Molina-Gavilán, Andrea Bell, J. Andrew Brown, Elizabeth Ginway, Rachel Haywood-Ferreira, Pablo Capanna, Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz, Omar Vega, Miguel Ángel Fernández Delgado, and Remi Maure are worth mentioning. With the exception of Capanna's *El sentido de la ciencia ficción* (1967), one of the first academic studies on science fiction published in Spanish⁹, most of the scholarly works on Latin American scifi appear only within the past two or three decades. The majority of these studies attempt to map out the history and chronology of Latin American science fiction. They do so across countries, as is the case with Bell and Haywood-Ferreira, or nationally, as Remi-Maure and Omar Vega do respectively with Chile and Trujillo Muñoz and Fernández Delgado do with Mexican scifi. These studies arrive at similar conclusions regarding the evolution and current state of science fiction in Latin America. There have been consistent efforts to bring the genre out of obscurity all through the region since the 1960s. Sociopolitical turmoil and lack of publishers' support has affected Latin American scifi production negatively. Turn-of-the-century political transition, neoliberalism and the emergence of online resources have led to greater

⁹ Capanna's comprehensive study is concerned with science fiction worldwide rather than in Latin America. The critic dedicates only a brief section to science fiction in Argentina, which is described in broad terms only.

science fiction output and more varied themes. Yet the genre continues to lag behind worldwide and within Latin American literature, especially in countries with less incentives for scifi production, such as Perú, Colombia, and several Central American nations. Conversely, regions with more literary contests/awards and stronger online science fiction communities, such as Mexico and Argentina, have managed to keep science fiction production relatively active—though not necessarily popular beyond the scifi community.

Three particular studies stand out for mapping out Latin American science fiction's unique traits beyond mere chronological readings. Molina-Gavilán's *Ciencia ficción en español: una mitología moderna ante el cambio* is a comprehensive study of Latin American and Spanish peninsular science fiction literature and film. This ambitious project focuses on overarching themes featured in scifi products from the Spanish-speaking world, such as reliance on “soft” vs. “hard” science, inclusion and meaning of (Christian) religious symbols, sociopolitical engagement with national pasts, presents, and futures, feminism and questioning of gender norms, and use of humor and satire in Hispanic science fiction. Although Molina-Gavilán's work is commendable for its precise insights and all-encompassing scope, it does not focus significantly on posthuman figures, such as robots and cyborgs¹⁰. Brown and Ginway's edited volume, *Latin American Science Fiction: Theory and Practice*, also attempts to sketch the Latin American uniqueness of scifi works from various countries. The essays in this collection, written by various scholars, focus on topics as varied as cyberpunk, zombies, and the connections between comic books and science fiction while attempting to define a

¹⁰ Molina-Gavilán limits her succinct reading of posthuman figures to slavery analogies only.

possible Latin American science fiction canon. Again, posthuman figures are considered only briefly. J. Andrew Brown's *Cyborgs in Latin America* is the only exclusive study of posthumanism in Latin American sci-fi literature and visual media published to date. Brown's study focuses on sci-fi production from the Southern Cone, Bolivia, and Mexico. Although Brown's study and my own overlap regionally, the texts considered in this dissertation are different—and read differently—from those selected by Brown. After all, Latin American posthuman science fiction is extensive and diverse enough to deserve multiple studies and greater critical attention. Thus, this study aims to complement, rather than compete against, Brown's previous work. This dissertation also seeks to bring to light several authors and texts that, thus far, had only been mentioned in passing in larger-scope science fiction studies—if at all. Above all, I hope this project will add to Latin American science fiction's scholarly momentum and, simultaneously, motivate greater critical conversations on posthumanism in the region.

(Posthuman) Gender and Sexualities

Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation deal directly with posthuman expressions of gender and sexualities. Both chapters center upon the following question: why do traditional gender and sexualities continue to be prevalent in posthuman bodies in Latin American sci-fi? The theoretical works of Claudia Springer, Amanda Fernbach, Donna Haraway, Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, and N. Katherine Hayles are especially useful in our reading. Springer, Fernbach, and Hayles assert that technological experiences of sexuality, both in science fiction and the present, challenge traditional gender and sexual norms and binaries by producing new sexual paradigms through disembodiment and the use of technological prosthesis. Springer links the pleasure of technological and cyborg

sex to psychoanalysis, equating interactions with a computer matrix to a return to the womb—another type of matrix. Fernbach links cybersexualities to psychoanalysis as well, through what she terms *technofetishes*, many of which may be traced back to fear of aging and death—hence the prevalence of young, taut, blemish-free fembots in many of the texts in this study. Additionally, both authors suggest that posthuman sexualities are an effective way to represent non-hegemonic female sexualities as both pleasurable and legitimate in science fiction. Alternately, Hayles asks whether the human body will ever be rendered obsolete by technology, and if there will ever be a post-sex era. The answer to Hayles' question is undoubtedly complex, as each text in this study yields a different answer. Butler and Sedgwick's notions on gender performances and triangular desire will be useful for select readings in this study, because robots' artificial nature points at gender constructions' own artificiality. Haraway's concept of a fatherless, always-hybrid and reactionary cyborg will certainly be challenged by many of the Latin American posthuman representations studied here.

Our reading of posthuman masculinities will be informed by additional theories, such as Anne Balsamo's contrast between soft and harsh cyborg femininities and masculinities in science fiction, which suggests the genre may reinscribe—rather than challenge—hegemonic masculinities and femininities. In addition, Teresa Valdés and José Olavarría's joint study of post-Pinochet Chilean masculinities will guide the study of posthuman masculinities in texts like Muñoz Valenzuela's *Flores para un cyborg*. Similarly, Sharon Bird's study on male homosociality within all-male groups of friends will provide clues on (posthuman) masculine representations. Finally, Patricia Hill

Collins' study on Black women's representation in popular culture will inform our reading of race and Black (posthuman) bodies in Latin American science fiction.

Posthumanism and Psychoanalysis

Emotional attachment to posthuman entities is another main focus of Chapter 2 and, especially, Chapter 3. Psychoanalysis and recent posthuman theories on human-computer interactions help explain emotional connections to robots and cyborgs effectively. Freud's theory of the uncanny has been particularly useful in posthuman studies throughout the years¹¹. This study will reference Freud's notions directly, particularly his work on the uncanny and transference-love, as well as indirectly, by citing studies that J.P. Telotte, David Levy, Sherry Turkle, and John Suler developed from Freud's psychoanalytic theories. While Telotte reads cybernetic entities in science fiction as fearsome doubles of humans that threaten the species, Levy suggests that humanity's ongoing fascination with robots is due to a combination of transference-love and narcissism. Similarly, Suler explains attachment to computers and anthropomorphization of posthuman entities as a human attempt to recreate affective patterns from the past, especially childhood—transference-love is, once again, part of the answer. In addition, Turkle observes that research subjects find empathy in computers and robots because they feel less judged by cybernetic entities and, simultaneously, project their own human expectations and desires onto them. Moreover, Turkle foresees an anti-social future where human-computer relationships are more prevalent than those between humans, a theory she bases on present-day social patterns, especially in

¹¹ The term "uncanny valley," commonly used in both science fiction and robotics, stems from Freud's own work.

generations that are growing up with communication technologies such as social networks. All in all, these theories will aid our reading of various posthuman characters whose uniqueness and emotional responses depend more on human characters' projections and transference-love than on machines' own intelligence and autonomy.

Social Memory

Chapter 4 will explore the implications of posthumanism on social memory/amnesia, as well as the intersection of science fiction and unique Latin American political histories. Nelly Richard's observations on Chile's transition to democracy after Pinochet will be especially useful in our reading of posthuman patriotism and social engagement in the novel *Flores para un cyborg*. Additionally, this study will comment on the erasure and overwriting of social memory in Latin American posthuman scifi, a complementary contrast to the social memory preservation that J. Andrew Brown reads in other Latin American posthuman narratives. To this end, the works on social amnesia by Russell Jacoby, Gulnara Bakieva, and Jacob Climo with Maria Cattell, respectively, will be useful. These studies assert that social memory can be easily forgotten by subsequent generations, suppressed when it is perceived as shameful, and manipulated in different ways to serve specific groups' interests. All of these points are exemplified in texts studied in Chapter 4, where technology alters perceptions of national history and/or forces citizens to forget it altogether.

Surveillance in the Posthuman Era

Surveillance is a major, recurring theme in posthuman narratives studied in Chapter 4. Foucault's reading of Bentham's Panopticon will guide the reading of both

State and commercial surveillance in these texts. Panoptical structures are present here in their original sense as well as through new configurations that account for technological advances, such as the “information panopticon” and the synopticon. Shoshanna Zuboff’s concept of the information panopticon, which includes horizontal surveillance and sub-hierarchies that feed back into the watchtower, is particularly relevant to our reading of State surveillance and self-policing utopias in Mexican posthuman scifi. Similarly, the synopticon or inverse panopticon—where the many watch the few—proves effective in our study of broadcast media, reality TV, and commercial surveillance through cyborg technology. Studies by Theodor Adorno, Thomas Mathiesen, Mark Andrejevic, Neil Postman, and Howard Rheingold will inform these readings and help outline ways in which commercial surveillance and capitalist control may be more powerful than the State in Latin American posthuman science fiction.

Ecocriticism

It can be argued that spaces in several Mexican cyberpunk narratives studied in Chapter 4 are also posthuman. Readings of classic U.S. science fiction suggest that technology and the environment will always be at odds, forming a binary opposition in which nature represents life while hyper-urbanization is a harbinger of the apocalypse. However, Latin American posthuman narratives such as Guzmán Wolffer’s *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros* overturn this binary by presenting nature as both an evil force—in the form of permanently contaminated water, plant, and animal sources—and a plague that takes over hyper-urban spaces instead of opposing them and remaining separate. Ecocritical theories by Rowland Hughes, Tama Leaver, and Evgenia Mikryukova will guide this reading and help outline an ecocritical distinction between Latin American

posthuman scifi and its English-language counterpart. Additionally, Murray Bookchin and Michael Zimmerman's respective ideas on the effect of sociopolitical forces on environmental change will inform our reading of ecological tragedy in Guzmán Wolfffer's novel, where not even robots are able (or willing) to help decontaminate the hideously polluted Mexican landscape.

Internet and Digital Democracy Theories

The internet, as mentioned previously, is a theme beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, Jorge Cubría's "Padre Chip," which we study as a preview to future projects on internet-era Latin American scifi, features network technologies and online communities as tools for democracy and social participation. Individual studies by Andrew Feenberg, Darin Barney, and joint research by Sarita Albagli with María Lucía Maciel, and Jonatas Ferreira with Maria Eduarda da Mota Rocha focus upon that very issue: whether or not the internet may allow for new, more effective forms of democracy and social participation, especially for disenfranchised groups. These studies come from all angles. Some, like Feenberg, believe that the internet has a strong democratizing potential and internet communities may become "sites of resistance." Conversely, Barney warns against overly-enthusiastic endorsement of network technologies, for these, he asserts, are not impossible to control and manipulate by elites such as States and corporations. Alternatively, Albagli and Maciel see the internet as neither an all-democratizing solution nor an evil demise for mankind. Instead, they argue, the internet is a space rather than a tool, and the actors and interactions within said space may determine its potential. Ferreira and da Mota Rocha anchor the discussion onto the Latin American context by adding that the internet's existence alone does not guarantee democracy so

long as marginalized groups do not have meaningful access and opportunities for participation online. Such diverse—and divergent—perspectives will allow for a more complex reading of “Padre Chip” and remind us that, before considering the place of network technologies in Latin American posthuman sci-fi any further, it is crucial to remember how multifaceted the internet (and its potential uses) may be.

Cybernetic Body Parts: Dissertation Structure

A significant number of Latin American posthuman sci-fi texts focus on robot and cyborg gender and sexualities. For this reason, two chapters of this dissertation are dedicated to the study of gendered and/or sexed posthuman figures. Chapter 2 focuses exclusively on female robots as depicted by three authors: Chilean Enrique Araya, Mexican Ricardo Guzmán Wolffer, and Argentinean Alicia Suárez. Araya’s “Minerva” (1974) and Guzmán Wolffer’s *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros* (1993) appear to conform to pulp and canon sci-fi standards. Both authors describe female robots as oversexualized, hypersexual, heterosexual, and emphasize visual descriptions of the fembots’ bodies. Conversely, Suárez’ “Samantha” (1970) avoids scopophilic writing and focuses more deeply on the robot character’s own feelings and ambiguity. Nonetheless, all authors appear to characterize their robots as white and Europeanized. Guzmán Wolffer does introduce an Afro-Mexican character, who we only know as La Morena. Although La Morena may be read as posthuman, her characterization remains problematic. All in all, these authors’ use of posthumanism reveals important clues about the continued influence of the international canon and the comic book genre on Latin American sci-fi, the effect of self-censorship in Latin American sci-fi of the 1970s, and the

prevalence of sexuality as a marker of humanness for posthuman entities in posthuman scifi works from the region.

Chapter 3 continues the exploration of gender and sexualities in posthuman characters, this time through the study of male, gender-neutral, and gender-ambiguous cybernetic entities. The chapter begins with Chilean Ilda Cádiz Ávila's "Bil Tu" (1984), a story with a male robotic love interest/housekeeper. Cádiz Ávila's robot awakens strong romantic feelings in the female protagonist, yet his characterization is less scopophilic than that of Araya and Guzmán Wolfffer. Moreover, "Bil Tu" poses additional questions about gender roles in relation to marriage, household division of labor, and parenting. Cádiz Ávila's short story is followed by another Chilean narrative, Diego Muñoz Valenzuela's *Flores para un cyborg* (1997). The protagonist is, once again, a humanoid android that serves as an unconditional companion to the protagonist. Unlike "Bil Tu," however, the robot in Muñoz Valenzuela's novel is not a lover but a best friend to the protagonist. Tom the android stands out not only because he is a subject instead of an object of affection, but also because his mission and motivations are inextricably tied to Chilean history. Tom's expression of patriotism is also tied to his expression of masculinity, adding to his uniqueness as a posthuman character. The chapter continues with a reading of Elena Aldunate's 1963 "Juana y la cibernética." This Chilean short story features an industrial machine that may or may not be alive, which calls the human protagonist, a spinster named Juana, to join it in a violent sexual ritual. Juana herself evolves from human to posthuman when she abandons her obedience to gender norms and expectations to pursue posthuman sexual gratification. Finally, Angélica Gorodischer's "A la luz de la casta luna electrónica" (1973) closes the chapter.

Gorodischer's challenges the patterns observed so far in male-authored vs female-authored Latin American sci-fi texts by presenting a story that reads like a scopophilic pulp on the surface but is filled with feminist reversals on the inside. "A la luz..." features posthumanism as complex, ambiguous in both gender and sex(uality), and potentially evil. Gorodischer overturns gender and power binaries in her text, yet highlights the grey areas and complications in all her characters and world-building, ultimately suggesting the danger and futility of binary oppositions.

Chapter 4 focuses upon sociopolitical issues in Latin American posthuman science fiction. The chapter begins with alternate readings of Muñoz Valenzuela's and Guzmán Wolffer's novels respectively. We revisit *Flores para un cyborg* from a historical memory perspective and explore how public dissatisfaction with Chile's transition to democracy after Pinochet is reflected in the novel and in Tom the robot. Then, an ecocritical reading of *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros* offers new ways to interpret posthumanism vis-à-vis environmental disaster in Guzmán Wolffer's novel, where political (in)activity and social (dis)engagement appear to influence environmental decay directly. The next section of Chapter 4 centers upon surveillance in two Mexican sci-fi short stories: Jorge Cubría's "Pastillas de felicidad" (1990) and Pepe Rojo's "Ruido Gris" (1996). Both texts find inspiration in two English-language classics: Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*. Nevertheless, these Mexican narratives offer their own takes on utopia, excessive pleasure, and permanent surveillance. "Pastillas de felicidad" deals with State control through permanent surveillance of citizens, whom the authorities track via technological media and keep obedient through technological and chemical body modification. "Ruido gris" presents

surveillance and control from a different angle: corporate surveillance. Rojo's protagonist is a cyborg reporter whose eyes double as cameras, which he uses to record and transmit scandalous events in random citizens' lives. The society and characters in "Ruido gris" are obsessed with TV and celebrity culture, yet their lives are jaded and the boundary between private and public has been obliterated in favor of capitalist enterprises, which appear to hold greater power than the State itself. Finally, Jorge Cubría's "Padre Chip" wraps up the chapter with a glimpse of the internet as a major theme in Latin American scifi. "Padre Chip" touches upon religion, bipartisan politics, genocide, and online technologies' power to give a voice to traditionally disenfranchised groups. The thematic diversity in this chapter is a testament to the diversity that exists and calls for further study in Latin American posthuman science fiction.

Final Considerations

This dissertation, which covers narratives spanning four decades and three countries, offers but a sampling of the vast amount of Latin American posthuman science fiction texts that are yet to be studied or even discovered. Nonetheless, each reading included here has been done in an effort to demonstrate the depth and uniqueness that posthuman science fiction from this cultural region has to offer. Despite some of these texts' partial adherence to canon genre conventions, the following chapters show Latin America in the form of robots, cyborgs, and technologies that become increasingly enmeshed with what we once considered exclusively human. Sometimes, Latin America's past and present show through these robots. At other times, these cyborgs and machines are the face of the region's future. No matter how fantastic and implausible these figures may appear, or to what extent real contexts influence science fictional

technologies and characters, let us remember that science fiction, too, is capable of inspiring reality¹². Let us read on and find out if Latin American posthuman scifi may someday become a literary Singularity.

¹² Many of the technologies we employ today, from automatic sliding doors to the (now-outdated) flip-phones, bluetooth headsets, tablet computers and 3D printing, are indebted to the science fictional inventions appearing in Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek* TV series, both in its 1960's and post-1980's iterations (Hsiegh, McDonald). Similarly, NASA acknowledges that Stanley Kubrik and Arthur C. Clarke's film *2001: A Space Odyssey* inspired many of the technologies used in the International Space Station in the present (Dunbar).

Chapter 2: Fembots Fatales

The robot has been created to outgender its apparent gender. It is the ultimate womanly woman, occasioning 'concealed sighs' in the gentlemen of the court and 'envious breathing' in the ladies. But the absolute femininity of the robot is not intrinsic, not part of its nature (and I use the term deliberately), but a part of its programming. The robot is programmed to draw upon conventional feminine gestures in order to charm Arrhodes to his doom.

(Jo Alyson Parker, "Gendering the Robot")

While popular culture texts enthusiastically explore boundary breakdowns between humans and computers, gender boundaries are treated less flexibly. [...] Cyborg imagery has not so far realized the ungendered ideal theorized by Donna Haraway.

(Claudia Springer, "The Pleasure of the Interface")

An automaton's closeness to humanity has long been a common trope in both Science Fiction and fantasy works. From Bradbury's electric grandmother sold by Facsimile, Inc., to the ever hopeful android officer, Lt. Commander Data, in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, to David, the child you can buy, in Spielberg's film *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001), there's a plethora of narratives centered around artificially constructed beings erasing the line between the manufactured and the so-called natural¹³, the mechanical and the organic, the machine and the human.

What exactly can make a machine "human"? In Bradbury's short story, the grandmother looks, sounds, and behaves like a typical older woman of her time through the advent of special polymers and machines that faithfully recreate organic body parts. Data and David have also been built to look as close to a living person as possible, but in both cases it is ultimately their (in)ability to experience feelings and emotions which determines whether or not they can be considered human. All in all, Western Science Fiction tends to resort to the "looks-intelligence-emotions" formula when it comes to humanizing machine characters. Indeed, acquiring emotions or "souls" is the culmination

¹³ The concept of "natural" is extremely problematic, particularly when it is used as a synonym for "normal" in its intersections with gender, sexuality, race, and other areas where normalcy itself cannot (and perhaps should not) be ultimately determined.

of becoming human. This is especially typical in late Twentieth-Century U.S. Science Fiction, where films such as Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), popular TV shows such as *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-1994), *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995-2001), and even low-budget sitcoms like *Small Wonder* (1985-1989) relay the same message: unless they can express genuine, spontaneous emotion, looks and intelligence will not make humanoid machines "human."

In the case of Latin American Science Fiction, however, sexuality plays a much greater role than emotion in defining the humanity of a robot. For example, in Enrique Araya's short story "Minerva," the protagonist does not acknowledge the robot Minerva as a successful attempt at recreating humanity until he gets to assess her sexual performance. Similarly, in Diego Muñoz Valenzuela's novel *Flores para un Cyborg*, Tom the robot feels incomplete without genitals. Only after having a functioning penis installed by his builder is he regarded as "un hombre completo" (190). Gendering, too, appears as a decisive factor in the perception of robot characters as human. That is, "manly" or "womanly" behaviors—in their most stereotypical sense—bring machines closer to becoming part of the human collective. The question, then, is why and for what purpose do gender and sexuality permeate, or indeed define the identity and value of robot and cyborg characters in such Science Fiction works? As Claudia Springer points out, "It is perhaps ironic, though, that a debate over gender and sexuality finds expression in the context of the cyborg, an entity that makes sexuality, gender, and even humankind itself, anachronistic" (53). Exploring the gendering of artificial beings in these narratives, along with the intersection of traditional masculinities, femininities, sexual practices, and technology should shed light on some issues.

This chapter focuses on three Latin American Science Fiction narratives sharing a particular focus: female robot characters built by male engineers/scientists with the main purpose of fulfilling heteronormative—and generally sexist—male fantasies. While these texts are not representative of the entire Latin American SF corpus in terms of gender and sexualities, they do adhere to stereotypes commonly found in the Science Fiction and comic book genres worldwide. The first two, “Minerva” by Enrique Araya and the novel *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros* by Ricardo Guzmán Wolffer, follow commonplace “pulp” Science Fiction paradigms for representing (artificially-made) female objects of desire: lack of subjectivity, fetishization of the female body, and sexual exploitation. The third text explored in this chapter is a short story by Alicia Suárez titled “Samantha.” It focuses on a potentially cybernetic female protagonist that, while adhering to similar feminine physical standards as those in “Minerva” and *Que Dios se apiade*, is vested with greater subjectivity. Suárez’ text also criticizes problematic issues usually overlooked in similarly-themed works. Guided by theories of gender and posthumanism—as well as their intersection—my reading aims to find common themes in the representation of cybernetic female characters and how these constructions relate to gender roles, division of labor, female agency, social status, and race. Comparing these works with similarly-themed Anglo counterparts, such as *Blade Runner* and *The Stepford Wives*, will help determine whether gendered robot characters in Latin American Science Fiction have a regional uniqueness of their own. Whether local versions of this genre have been too influenced by the international canon and need further self-exploration and experimentation will also be an object of reflection.

“Minerva”: Of Domestic Goddesses and Drag Performances

“Minerva” belongs to a 1974 collection of short stories by Chilean author Enrique Araya titled *La tarjeta de Dios*. It is a first person fictional narrative on the experience of a Chilean man, Eduardo, visiting his old friend Anastasio in New York City and meeting the latter’s new wife, Minerva, for the first time. As the story progresses, Eduardo's uncontrollable lust for Minerva complicates his situation, as do her constant flirtations and eventual discovery that, “perfect” as she may seem, Minerva is just a robot created by Anastasio. At first sight, the story seems to be an unremarkable pulp narrative, complete with the genre's traditional oversexualized, yet underdeveloped female characters, clichéd style¹⁴, and excess of misogyny. However, a closer look at this seemingly vulgar story reveals more complex details that allow for alternate—and perhaps more intriguing—interpretations.

Claudia Springer argues that “while popular culture texts enthusiastically explore boundary breakdowns between humans and computers, gender boundaries are treated less flexibly” (41). This is especially evident in “Minerva.” The title character is relegated exclusively to the domestic sphere despite her being a machine that could be engineered for use in virtually any kind of environment. Minerva is a completely mechanical being with no organic components, and yet very specific gender and gender roles have been assigned to her: those of a submissive yet eager-to-please housewife. While Anastasio works and travels to conferences, the robot-wife stays home. She is also kept in isolation, and Anastasio claims she enjoys it: “a Minerva no le agrada el bullicio y sí, en exceso, la

¹⁴ This is best illustrated in the various physical descriptions within the story. Minerva's mouth, for example, is depicted as “labios de frutilla con sus dientes como fichas de casino lujoso” (8), and her arms are characterized as “serpientes domesticadas [que] tienen la tersura de los frutos maduros” (8).

soledad" (6). However, Anastasio admits shortly after that it is actually his preference that Minerva not be in contact with people other than himself: "Por lo demás, a mí tampoco me gusta exhibirla. Tú [Eduardo] eres el primer amigo que la conocerá" (6). Additionally, it is suggested that Minerva is Anastasio's possession when the latter confidently exclaims: "nadie podrá arrebatármela. Es la fidelidad misma" (7). Although Minerva is a machine, she fulfills the role of Anastasio's wife. Their household dynamics suggest a very uneven distribution of power: the husband is almost exclusively in control and keeps his partner isolated from others, as is typical of abusive relationships. This may be a futuristic fiction, but archaic binaries such as male/active vs. female/passive are very much present.

Throughout the entire story, Minerva never appears unhappy or dissatisfied. She speaks only to praise her husband or to beg him—and later Eduardo—to engage in sexual intercourse. When Anastasio arrives home from picking up Eduardo at the airport, for example, Minerva greets him by saying "Dulce amor, por fin has llegado. Te aguardaba más inquieta y anhelante que Penélope cuando Ulises regresaba a Ítaca" (7). Corny lines like these—the first Minerva utters in the story—suggest that she not only idealizes her husband, but also depends greatly on him. Similarly, and using the same second-rate folletín language, Minerva begs Anastasio to be with her shortly after: "Nuestros seres están fundidos desde una eternidad. Retorna a tu seno. Húndete en mí. No tardes más" (8). Minerva's urgency for her man is highlighted more explicitly shortly after. Her characterization as needy-child-cum-sex-addict recalls Catharine MacKinnon's critique of the way soft porn has become standard in mainstream male heterosexual desire: "women sexually accessible, have-able, there for them, wanting to be taken and used,

with perhaps just a little bondage" (166). While Araya's work is not entirely pornographic in nature, it does seem to reinforce the idea of female sexuality as mainly driven by the desire to be taken as an object and used. The degree to which this notion is repeated throughout the story allows for multiple interpretations: it could be endorsing it very strongly, or perhaps it's just satirizing it.

Satire or not, female voices are rarely heard in Araya's text. Minerva's character does not have much substantial dialogue of her own. But she is prominent throughout the narrative, especially by way of her physical presence. According to both Haraway and Moravec, technologies that are meant to imitate or even surpass human mental functions such as cyborgs and mobile computers will eventually make gender obsolete (Springer 41). And yet, as critics like Springer and Janet Bergstrom have noted, "cyberbodies [in fiction], in fact, tend to appear masculine or feminine to an exaggerated degree" (Springer 41). "Minerva" fits the pattern, gendered as female and oversexualized and overfeminized to a fault. Her name may recall wisdom and matters of the mind, but this "Minerva" is "one material girl" (Santí). Her first attribute mentioned is her voice, described in numerous occasions as exceptionally sweet, feminine, even hypnotizing¹⁵. As the story unfolds, it is Minerva's body, however, that becomes the center of the narrative. The first time Eduardo—and the reader—meets her, the robot is lying provocatively in bed,

¹⁵ When first arriving at Anastasio's, Eduardo thinks: "Hemos llegado a la puerta del jardín y un suave y dulcísimo canto de mujer me pulsa las cuerdas musicales del cerebro y acaso de la médula" (6). Shortly thereafter, he adds: "Es lo más tierno y embriagador que he escuchado en mi vida. tiene algo de María Callas" (6). Then, on the next page, he admits to be fully under the spell of Minerva's singing with comments like "ya estoy hechizado y si la dueña de esa voz me pidiera que asesinara a su marido no podría dejar de obedecer" (7) and "el canto de las afamadas sirenas no ha de haber sido más eficiente que el de Minerva para seducir" (7)

dressed in a scantily clad satin outfit. The narrator-protagonist then describes her in more detail to emphasize the sexual temptation her character evokes:

Su camisa de seda es color de cielo en mañana de primavera. Sus brazos son serpientes domesticadas y tienen la tersura de los frutos maduros. Su garganta vibra levemente como si rumiara besos. Y los montes de sus pechos desde lejos se presienten tensos, tibios y vibrantes bajo la seda, menos suave que ellos. (8)

Although Minerva's ethnicity is never overtly specified, it could be argued that she is modeled after Greek deities, especially Aphrodite, as evident in the constant comparisons between these and the title character¹⁶ (11). Similarly, in an effort to seduce Eduardo, Minerva fabricates a story about her childhood in "los colmenares de mi padre en el Olimpo" (10). The text does not include any specific descriptions of her body type, hair, skin or eye color. However, everything pertaining to Minerva—her voice, her touch, and her clothing—is described as light (both in its "liviano" and "claro" connotations), which could be interpreted as a reflection of her physical lightness. Additionally, while perceived age is never mentioned, Minerva's "skin" and body parts are indeed characterized as smooth and taut, thus suggesting that she has the outward appearance of a young, physically fit woman. It is significant that the female protagonist in this Chilean short story, a robot that could have been customized to look like anyone in the world, ends up looking so European and compliant with modern beauty standards of physical

¹⁶ It is perhaps humorous that the narrator-protagonist, Eduardo, keeps referencing mythological characters throughout the story without truly knowing their origins. In reference to Aphrodite, for example, he says "en estos momentos comprendo mejor la frase del texto escolar sobre mitología griega que refiriéndose a Venus, la Diosa del Amor, dice que fue hecha con las espumas del mar" (11). Venus, however, is the Roman equivalent of this deity, so Eduardo's statement is wrong. It is unclear, however, if this mistake was intentionally inserted by the author for satire, or if Araya himself had his Greek and Roman deity names mixed up. The overall literary quality of "Minerva" suggests the latter.

fitness and youth. Though perhaps not surprisingly, Araya is not the only Latin American Science Fiction author to envision white, sexy fembots in his works, as we will see further on.

Evidently, misogynistic elements abound in "Minerva." These go beyond the female protagonist's shallow, sexed-up characterization. One of them is the constant suggestion that, for women, intellect and beauty are polar opposites and, for the most part, mutually exclusive. When Eduardo first hears about his friend's new wife, he thinks to himself: "Pienso que ha de ser tan fea como él. Una buena mujer e inteligente, pero no presentable en público" (6). That is, physical beauty is highlighted as the main criterion for romantic love. When Eduardo hears Minerva's alluring song, he reflects: "siento miedo de enamorarme si es bella" (6). Physical attractiveness rules out other traits or talents, such as the ability to achieve economic success and independence. These suggestions become especially evident in Eduardo's inner monologue, when he tries to find a plausible explanation as to why such a potentially exquisite woman as Minerva—whom he has not met just yet—would agree to marry an unattractive, unremarkable man such as Anastasio. The answer is money: "Guardo silencio y pienso que ella ha de ser muy pobre y tal vez de origen muy humilde" (7). Evidently, these are all Eduardo's assumptions and assessments. It could be argued, then, that the story itself is not misogynous but Eduardo, the character, is. However, Araya's story lacks any counterarguments for these statements and assumptions, and in fact includes other elements that reinforce the idea of women—both organic and cybernetic—as inferior, closer to objects than to subjects.

Yet another sign of misogyny in "Minerva" is Anastasio's total control over his wife's actions. Of course, this takes on a literal meaning once it is revealed that Minerva is a robot, designed and remotely operated by none other than her husband. Anastasio admits to an incredulous Eduardo: "utilicé mis más profundos conocimientos teóricos y prácticos de electrónica para construir una mujer que tuviera todas las características físicas, intelectuales y morales que a mí me agradan" (13). He then goes on to explain that Minerva was built from a blend of plastics from a company named International Rubber Co. (13) while her sensory systems came from Japan (14). Finally, the inventor explains how he himself programmed and designed all of Minerva's seemingly voluntary and autonomous reactions and words: "Llevo siempre conmigo un regulador, a control remoto, de tonalidades y cambiador de las casetas magnetofónicas, lo que me permite provocar las reacciones físicas, conceptuales y fonéticas adecuadas de Minerva" (14). He even wrote a "manual de instrucciones muy detallado y práctico" with information on how to control and maintain Minerva, a guidebook that Anastasio leaves with Eduardo while he goes away on a work-related trip (15). In the end, Minerva, robot but still wife, has no words or actions of her own. Both her behavior and her place in the home are dictated by a man, be it Anastasio or Eduardo, during the former's absence. Literal as it may be, this represents complete patriarchal design and control of women, especially within the domestic sphere.

At the end of the story, Eduardo commissions Anastasio to design and build a robot wife for him too. He names her Diana, and requests that she be modeled after Minerva "pero pelirroja" (16). Although Eduardo ends up paying Anastasio three thousand dollars for his new artificial wife, the former considers this to be a cheap price to pay in the long

run: " El monto del precio lo estimo totalmente amortizado. Si me hubiese casado con mujer vulgar habría gastado mucho más en alimentación, joyas, caprichos, maternidad" (16). Minerva and Diana are regarded by the male protagonists as perfect "women" who make them happy because of their status as commodities that can be produced and exchanged for money. Conversely, flesh-and-blood women are viewed as a severe financial drain to men in the story. In a very revealing—and cringe-worthy—passage, Anastasio alludes to artificiality as an inescapable trait in all women, organic or cybernetic:

Siempre las mujeres actúan impulsadas por nuestras propias actitudes. Es una suerte de control remoto por motivaciones psicológicas. Así se explica que aún sabiendo que ella es un ser artificial, hija de mi capacidad científico-técnica, le ame. No la cambiaría por otra mujer normal en cuanto a su nacimiento, pues todas son artificiales. (14-15)

Anastasio's words could be interpreted as an attempt at satire and a criticism of consumerism—especially in relation to women and the beauty industry. Men's involvement in consumer culture is also a target of satire in "Minerva" (the two male protagonists find their happy ending with cybernetic commodities!), but it is worth noting that their position regarding consumerism is presented in a different light. While organic women are scoffed for being too artificial, men with artificial tastes are presented as winners who benefit from intersecting capitalism and technology.

In the end, Minerva—and by extension Diana, her clone—ends up being nothing short of a glorified sex toy, as evident in Eduardo's satisfied words: "Me agrada mucho que a Minerva sea necesario cargarla sólo cada tres días de casetas magnetofónicas, de

líquidos tibios y demás elementos para que cante, hable y ame" (15).¹⁷ However, some quasi-philosophical reflections stem from Eduardo's realization that he could be experiencing emotions toward a machine, and he finally concedes that these feelings do not stem from a woman's human origins but rather from behavior—her *performance* of womanhood, if you will:

Me pregunto ¿hasta dónde importa que las manifestaciones eróticas de una mujer deriven de su existencia natural, orgánica, de una hija de mujer? Si su comportamiento es idéntico al de todas las mujeres bellas y ardientes, ¿qué importancia tiene que Minerva haya nacido de la genialidad tecnológica de Tasio? (15-16)

While the eroticism and physicality of women continue to be highlighted, one alternate reading of this text surfaces here: It is possible to be(come) a woman without biologically¹⁸ being one. Two particular interpretations, which aren't mutually exclusive, come to mind. One: the character Minerva can be understood as a drag performance by Anastasio. And two: Minerva serves as an interface for homoerotic contact between Anastasio and Eduardo.

As Judith Butler puts it, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constructed by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (34). "Minerva"—and, by extension, other narratives featuring gendered

¹⁷ This particular quotation is reminiscent of Felisberto Hernández' "Las Hortensias," where the male protagonist becomes addicted to sex with humanoid dolls filled with warm liquids, similar to Minerva. One cannot help but wonder, what is the origin of these male characters' bizarre fascination with rubber filled with hot water? Perhaps a question worth future research.

¹⁸ The concept of biological sex is extremely complex and problematic, and I use the term here in its most mainstream sense. I do understand, however, and agree with critics such as Anne Fausto-Sterling, Judith Butler, and Monique Wittig—among others—that biological sex is, like gender, a set of socially (and even arbitrarily) constructed categories.

machines— makes this obvious. A robot, initially a mass of circuits and synthetic materials, is molded to look like a woman and programmed to act as such. While it is evident that Minerva's gender is a mere mask, it isn't quite as clear who the performer of that gender truly is until it is revealed that the machine has no autonomy or initiative of its own. It is Anastasio who composes her every word and controls her every move. The mesmerizing songs Minerva sings are born from Anastasio's musical sensibilities. Her mangled poetry is simply an exact retransmission of Anastasio's misbegotten verses. Her movements, the tone in her voice, even her looks, are all designed and (remotely) executed by her inventor. It can be said, then, that Minerva serves as a sort of puppet through which Anastasio can create—or rather become—his ideal woman. It can even be contended that this constitutes a drag performance, perhaps not in its strictest, most traditional sense—Anastasio, after all, never applies a female look onto his own body—but certainly in its chief implications.

While it is assumed that Anastasio wears traditional male clothing throughout the story¹⁹, both his direct words and those he utters through Minerva constantly suggest an inextricable union between the two of them: "nuestros seres están fundidos desde una eternidad" (8), "no he estado lejos de ti ni un solo instante: te he llevado todo el día en mi espíritu" (8), "Si [Anastasio] te ama, su amor también me inflama" (9), "Ella todo lo comprende y yo... también" (9), etc. In other words, Anastasio is aware that he and Minerva are one and the same, albeit occupying separate "bodies." And yet, he insists

¹⁹ Neither Anastasio's nor Eduardo's clothes are ever described. It is merely said that Anastasio looks "feo y desgarrado" (5) and that his clothing features a pocket where he keeps the remote control for Minerva (14). Reductive as this assumption may be, men's clothing is generally more likely to have pockets than women's, so my reading of the text presumes that Anastasio is wearing pants with pockets or maybe a shirt with a pocket big enough to carry such a contraption.

upon—and enjoys—performing as a female through the mechanical female body he has created. Butler identifies three dimensions of corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. The three are in constant interplay but dissonances among them come to light during drag performances, when their mutual conflict becomes more evident (187). In Anastasio/Minerva's case, much like a drag performance, there are palpable dissonances between the three: Anastasio's gender identity is male, the machine's anatomical sex is technically null (although currently customized to function as "female"), while Minerva's gender performance is female.

Butler also highlights the parodic nature of drag performances and their effectiveness at mocking ideas of "true" gender (identities) (186, 188). And if parody is an imitation colored with satire, then the character Minerva is most definitely a parody of stereotypically feminine characters. By imitating the "ideal woman," this amalgamation of man, machine, and feminine stereotypes ends up—perhaps unintentionally—mocking the excessively immature and myopic notion of female “perfection” as rendered by mainstream hetero-male sexism. And Minerva's incompleteness is, above all, the greatest sign that she is a parody, a mere imitation. On the one hand, this character is behaviorally and psychologically incomplete: she can perform very limited actions, designed exclusively "para que cante, hable y ame" (15); Minerva's words are meant only for praising and sexually enticing her man; and she literally has no mind of her own—everything she does and says comes, unadulterated, from Anastasio. On the other hand, Minerva is also physically incomplete: she spends the entire time lying in bed—never sitting or standing up—thus suggesting that she has no mobility and her legs may be there

for cosmetic purposes only. It is also unlikely that Minerva has had sensors installed to allow her to experience (sexual) pleasure—she is built to give, not to receive.

The overelaborate language commonly used by Minerva is another symptom of parody in Anastasio's drag performance. The robot's verbal expressions are so over the top that even Eduardo comments on how "pedantes y cursis" Minerva's words sound (7). Much like eye shadow caked on bushy eyebrows, or an island of bright red lipstick amidst a wiry beard, Minerva's excesses—both verbal and behavioral—are garish exaggerations that aim to simultaneously make a gender performance more credible while intensifying the opposition between the performance itself and other corporeal dimensions of the performer. Such a clash offers a brief, yet helpful glance at the artificial nature of gender identities and systems. As Butler asserts: "As much as drag creates a unified picture of 'woman' (what its critics often oppose), it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence" (187)²⁰. At the end of the day, Anastasio's performance as Minerva reads like cross-dressing in a Bugs Bunny cartoon: obvious, riddled with stereotypes, extremely reductive, but ultimately laughable. And it is laughable because it reminds us that just like cartoonish cross-dressing, gender is just a series of imitations, where even the "original" gender identity these seek to

²⁰ It is worth noting that Butler is not necessarily arguing that drag aims to portray femaleness in an authentic, unadulterated way, nor that "becoming a woman" is a drag performer's aim. Her claim is that despite the superficial feminineness of drag performances, their ultimate intention is to destabilize monolithic ideas of gender: "In the place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows [the] distinctness [between sex and gender] and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity" (187-188). In this sense, Butler's thoughts on drag performances are not too far from those of critics like Sarduy, who views drag as a means to neutralize gender. In both perspectives, drag destabilizes traditional, clear-cut gender paradigms. Moreover, both Butler and Sarduy view imitation/simulation practices as avenues for exposing the artificiality (or even inexistence) of the very thing they reproduce (Butler 187-188, Sarduy 13)

emulate is yet another imitation whose origin is unknown, or perhaps impossible to determine:

Gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin. To be more precise, it is a production which, in effect—that is, in its effect—postures as an imitation. This perpetual displacement constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization; parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities. (Butler 188)

Indeed, Minerva's character, initially flat and stereotypical, does lend itself to surprisingly varied interpretations. She can be read as a high-tech sex toy nicknamed "wife," a futuristic medium for long-distance drag performances, and, now, as an interface for homoerotic contact between men. In her study of the love triangle model proposed by René Girard, Eve Sedgwick proposes that in any erotic rivalry—more specifically between two men over a woman, as is the case in "Minerva"—"the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent" (21). Moreover, Sedgwick examines the potential for many "hidden symmetries" and "hidden obliquities"—including homosocial and homosexual desire—within the triangle model, which neither Freud nor Girard had addressed in their respective readings of triangular desire (22). In "Minerva," both male characters share two strong bonds: one of long-kept friendship, and another of sexual rivalry over Minerva. The former strengthens the foundation of the latter, thus making the overall bond between Anastasio and Eduardo possibly stronger than the bonds between Anastasio and Minerva or between Eduardo and Minerva. Additionally, the triangular

dynamics among Anastasio, Eduardo, and Minerva exhibit some of the features Sedgwick identifies as typical avenues for homosocial and homosexual contact within a love triangle: cuckoldry, and transactions between the two men.

According to Sedgwick, "'to cuckold' is by definition a sexual act, performed on a man, by another man" (49)²¹. Despite the ambiguous wording, the cuckoldry in Sedgwick's analysis always involves a woman and concerns men playing tricks on other men in order to become closer to them—strengthening their homosocial bond—but also to assert superiority in one way or another. There is, then, a hierarchy where one of the men plays an active role while the other is more passive. Often, the power differential between the two men is based on knowledge: the cuckold is completely unaware that he is part of a game (Sedgwick 50). In "Minerva," Anastasio tricks Eduardo into sleeping with his remote-controlled robot wife without letting the latter know she isn't human—or being commanded by her inventor. The knowledge Anastasio has over Eduardo gives him a cognitive advantage and places him in an active position. Meanwhile, Eduardo remains passive in many ways: unaware of the farce put on by his friend, he never tries to trick Anastasio back—at least not in the same manner. Additionally, Eduardo allows the robot to seduce him and succumbs to her advances without making any significant ones of his own.

²¹ There are, in fact, various (and varying) definitions for "cuckold," both as a noun and as a verb. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as both "the husband of an adultress, often regarded as an object of derision" and "(of a man) make (another man) a cuckold by having a sexual relationship with his wife" (Oxford Dictionary Online). Additionally, Wendy Doniger defines it, in response to Sedgwick's own definition, as "something that one man does to another man—even though it happens when a man and a woman are alone together and the man who is the object of the verb is usually not present at all" (299).

Triangular transactions between men over possession of a woman are another notable feature in Sedgwick's notion of cuckoldry, where women are often equated with currency and property (50). In "Minerva," there are two specific examples of triangular transactions between the two male protagonists: the sharing of Minerva, and the (literal) selling of Diana. Shortly after Eduardo's sexual encounter with Minerva ends, Anastasio comes into the room and clarifies that he isn't upset by what has just happened by saying "la sabiduría es patrimonio de la humanidad" (12), in reference to Minerva's name. Confused at his friend's odd willingness to share his wife, Eduardo reflects: "En mi desconcierto alcanzo a columbrar que siendo Minerva la Diosa [sic] de la sabiduría, por ello es del dominio público, pero no logro comprender que Tasio me ceda a su mujer por el hecho de haber sido bautizada con ese nombre, cosa un tanto casual" (12). This comparison between Minerva and wisdom as publicly accessible suggests that, to Anastasio, more can be gained from sharing with other men than from keeping things for himself. In other words, Anastasio values the homosocial bonds that may come from allowing other men to enjoy his (robotic) wife sexually and thus creating that commonality between him and them, than any private bond between him and Minerva alone. The female robot is, then, just a currency invested into the strengthening of Anastasio's homosocial bond with Eduardo. Similarly, When Anastasio constructs Diana and sells her for three-thousand dollars to Eduardo the idea of woman as property is ultimately solidified, and the bond between the two men is further enriched as they develop one more trait in common: they are both "owners" of robot wives now. If "sex and discounts [are the] cornerstones of a healthy relationship" (Feresten), sex and commerce may very well be the key to long-lasting friendships.

Sedgwick suggests that cuckoldry and similar interactions and transactions between men in erotic triangle systems may be aimed at intensifying male homosocial, but not necessarily homosexual, bonds. For example, it could be said that Anastasio's overt desire to share Minerva with Eduardo stems from his wish to gain Eduardo's approval and become closer to him in a homosocial, yet heterosexual way. Nonetheless, it could also be argued that Anastasio's cuckoldry, exchanges, and interactions with Eduardo had homoerotic implications. When first meeting at the airport, Eduardo notices an overflowing happiness and excitement in Anastasio's facial expression: "Igualmente feo y desgarbado como antes, resplandece en su rostro una dicha tan pujante que anula algo su desarmonía" (5). Why is he so happy upon meeting Eduardo? Similarly, two instances arise in which Minerva, when speaking with Eduardo, states overtly that Anastasio feels love for him: "Eduardo, amado... de Tasio, como él lo dijera " (10), and "Tasio se agiganta por misteriosas influencias del corazón de su amigo" (9). When Eduardo learns that Minerva had been controlled by Anastasio all along—including her heavy flirtations and every move and sound she made during sex—he does not become upset, rebuff, or even question Anastasio's indirect sexual contact with him. Anastasio even confronts Eduardo about it: "Por cierto, y ¿ves en ello algún inconveniente?" (14), yet Eduardo's only complaint is that Minerva is not spontaneous at all. While there clearly is some indirect homosexual contact between Anastasio and Eduardo during the latter's sexual encounter with Minerva, homoerotic desire between the male protagonists is never explicitly confirmed. However, it is never explicitly denied either.

Unoriginal if read superficially, Araya's short story becomes far more fascinating when explored under a queer lens. Homosociality and homoeroticism reside quietly

behind the blatant chauvinistic clichés in this and similar Science Fiction narratives of “perfect” cybernetic women, where male desires are ultimately fulfilled with male-produced solutions. Moreover, narcissism may be a key player in this type of narrative as well, as seeing the self reflected in inanimate objects may be the root of this strange fascination with robots, automatons, dolls, and cybernetic humanoid puppets like Minerva. As Liu explains, “The force of anthropomorphic projections makes it possible for objects to look back on us [...] This shock of (mis)recognition is the sign of auratic decline: as experience becomes more and more impoverished, inanimate objects are the only things that hold our full attention” (22). Perhaps all Anastasio and Eduardo ever wanted was to love themselves a little more. And, with the aid of (fetishistic) technology, they found their happy ending.

Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros, indeed.

Published in 1993 by Ricardo Guzmán Wolffer, this novel is one of the few Latin American book-length Science Fiction narratives featuring a female robot as (co)protagonist. Spanning a quick 138 pages, it is commendable for its fearless attempt to create a place in Mexican literature for fantastic narratives dealing with the clash of high technology and urban dystopia—a genre best known as cyberpunk²². Guzmán Wolffer envisions a not-so-distant future when the Mexican population and landscape will be increasingly ravaged by both apocalyptic pollution and the festering corruption of the

²² Cyberpunk is a sub-genre within science fiction notable for its anti-utopian character and focus on future worlds in decline. Cyberpunk literature typically presents “bleak portrayals of ultra-technologized urban life in a near-future world where globalisation [sic], commodification and corporate control have accelerated immeasurably. They are replete with cyborg ‘post-humans’, absolute surveillance, invasive bio and molecular engineering, and immersive virtual realities which blend seamlessly into ‘real’ urban landscapes” (Stephen Graham 389)

State. All of the nation's borders have been closed off to the world in order to keep radioactive waste from spilling over into foreign lands; mutations have begun to appear in both animals—thus prompting the appearance of giant insects and rodents—and people. In order to prevent human mutations from proliferating, the State has established a system of strictly controlled pregnancies and births, in which no child is allowed to be carried to term if any mutations are suspected and all newborns must be registered and immunized. The plot of *Que Dios se apiade* centers upon the appearance of two dead bodies in separate landfills: a woman named Mirth Rose, who has very recently given birth, and an unrelated newborn child, both of whom had mysteriously escaped the State's surveillance system. It is up to the protagonist, lawyer-cum-detective Sergio Lupus, and his robot assistant, Leticia/Magnolia, to solve the case and, in the process, uncover the schemes of a maddened time traveler who is planning to take over the world and stop him from doing so.

The world crafted by Guzmán Wolffer seems intriguing at first and shows potential for an epic futuristic tale. And yet the novel's style leaves much to be desired, from its tired clichés to stylistic faux pas (including redundant wording and typos). Characters—especially female ones—are few and shallow. The narrative, convoluted with subplots that are poorly connected at best, is resolved through a hasty *deus ex machina*. Its use of humor is facile, cheap. Sex scenes are excessive, gratuitous, devoid of imagination. In addition, the first edition of this novel, with all of its formal shortcomings, is the only one available to date. Overall, *Que Dios se apiade* reads like a B movie with maximum ambitions and minimal budget. Nonetheless, Guzmán Wolffer's novel has some redeeming qualities worth studying, such as its criticism of political

corruption in Mexico, environmental decline, border issues, and its take on posthuman relationships²³. *Que Dios se apiade* features a cybernetic female protagonist, the robot Leticia (later renamed Magnolia), whose participation in the narrative can be read from multiple angles within the gender and (posthuman) sexualities lens. Her contrast with another key—yet obscured—character, referred to only as “la morena,” is of special significance, as it brings about crucial points intersecting gender, race, alternative sexualities, and scopic pleasure, among others. All of these points will guide our reading of Guzmán Wolffer’s novel in this chapter.

Leticia/Magnolia: A Cybernetic Bombshell in Post-Apocalyptic Mexico

Not unlike Araya’s Minerva, Guzmán Wolffer’s Leticia/Magnolia is a female robot physically indistinguishable from an organic woman. Not just any organic woman, but someone who is young, sexy, and very European. At the end of “Minerva,” we witnessed how the creation and selling of fembot Diana points at a possible trend in mass-production and marketing of “ideal” women. In Guzmán Wolffer’s fictional world, this is already commonplace. Humanoid robots are made and used for various tasks, including manual labor, law enforcement, and, inevitably, sex. Significantly, many of the cybernetic beings designed for non-sexual tasks still conform to physical standards meant to please the heterosexual male eye. Such is the case of “Series 46-ñp,” used exclusively in police investigations:

²³ As Trujillo Muñoz observes, *Que Dios se apiade* offers “una metáfora extremosa del México actual [...] por la conciencia histórica que se cuela por todo el tejido narrativo” (270). Additionally, the novel displays a palpable “Latin Americanness,” as evidenced by its reliance on “soft” sciences and religious themes rather than “hard” scientific data. This is, in fact, a distinctive trait of regional Science Fiction as posited by critics like Andrea Bell and Yolanda Molina Gavilán (*Cosmos Latinos*, 4) and Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz (271).

La serie 46-ñp era una de las últimas que nos habían enviado de los lejanos países de Oriente. Robots con el prototipo de la mujer elegante: altas, de excelente figura y mejor cara, fuertes y bien programadas. Tal capacidad de adaptabilidad resultaba muy útil para transitar en algunos sectores. Su estructura metálica era la misma con la que habían construido los robots antimotines. Salieron tan buenos esos robots que no hubo necesidad de otros. (17)

Not only do these machines look like flesh-and-blood people, but they are designed to behave humanly enough to deceive anyone, “aun en la cama” (17). As private agents, it could be understandable that a “46-ñp” robot might need to use believable seduction techniques in certain scenarios. However, some obvious questions remain: Why are all the robots in this special series female? If they are designed to work undercover, then why build them all to look like supermodels unlikely to be walking around en masse in post-apocalyptic Mexico City? Perhaps Guzmán Wolffer is just following his predecessors and sticking with a staple trope in the Science Fiction and comic book genres: gratuitous female sexiness²⁴.

As observed by both Trujillo Muñoz (269) as well as Bell and Molina Gavilán (17), *Que Dios se apiade* shows a clear influence of the comic book genre. Indeed, the novel has very graphic, almost cinematic moments²⁵. Similarly, *Lupus*, the main

²⁴ This is especially evident in science fiction cinema, including both iconic works (such as Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner* and Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*) and lesser known movies (including 1980’s films *Weird Science*, by John Hughes, and *Cherry 2000*, by Steve de Jarnatt), which feature overly sexualized female robot characters.

²⁵ The way some images are described in the novel gives the impression of watching a multi-angle film scene. On pages 30-31, for example, a highly visual description of a swarm fighting a predator, which then culminates in the last insect standing being mercilessly squashed by Pérez Grieg, is used as a metaphor for the oppressive power of bureaucracy and alternates descriptions reminiscent of various camera angles such as close-ups, extreme close-ups, and establishing shots.

character, is reminiscent of lone-wolf, psychologically troubled heroes a la Wolverine (*X-Men*), Rorschach (*Watchmen*), or even Batman. As Bell and Molina Gavilán point out regarding this and similar texts, "Female characters may play key roles and be smart and strong, but they must also generate sexual tension" (17). This is certainly the case for Leticia/Magnolia. The fembot protagonist's physical features are constantly emphasized and described in such a graphic, sexualized way that it is easy to visualize passages about her looks and body as if they were panels in a graphic novel.

When the reader is first introduced to Leticia/Magnolia, her voice is her first trait to be described, and the character is immediately linked to old Hollywood stars: "La voz sonaba agradable, seductora. Como Kim Novak" (40). But not only does Leticia/Magnolia sound like this American bombshell from 50's and 60's films, she looks almost exactly like her as well: "Medía un metro y ochenta, aproximadamente. De buen cuerpo. Su cara ciertamente recordaba a la de Kim Novak, hacía juego con la voz" (40). The robot is, then, a "new and improved" version of the actress, being taller (the real Novak is 12 centimeters shorter than her robot double), stronger than any organic woman or man, and perpetually young. In the narrative, science has allowed man to take a starlet's idealized looks and perfect them even further, thus turning previously unattainable beauty standards into a reality achievable only by humanoid machines. The novel clearly presents this artificial femininity as more desirable and valuable than organic versions of female gender and sexualities.

The inability to age or decay is a major feature that renders the cybernetic female body as superior to its organic counterpart and recurs in this and similar narratives. *Que Dios se apiade* emphasizes this through the stark opposition between positive physical

descriptions of young women and extremely negative descriptions of aged female characters. Smooth skin, firm limbs, and perky breasts are mentioned nearly every time a young female character appears in a scene, whether it be Leticia/Magnolia or minor characters such as la morena, the nurse, or prostitutes. Conversely, the descriptions of aged women in the novel almost always include harsh words in varying shades of disgust. A mature member of the time traveling cult is always called “la arruga” or “la arrugada” (20, 36). Lupus compares gigantic mutant insects to his former mother-in-law, suggesting that it takes special effort to look more horrible than her (54). And, in a very poor—and, frankly, vulgar—attempt at humor, the protagonist/narrator speculates that the chef at the restaurant where he eats lunch must have hypnotized her husband into marrying and having so many children with her, “porque tenía la jeta como si se la hubiera cagado un rinoceronte y del cuerpo ni hablar” (33-34).

Amanda Fernbach asserts that “the classical psychoanalytic account of fetishism is associated with conservative cultural fantasies about fixing women and producing idealized flawless icons of femininity” (23). In this sense, Fernbach explains, economic forces such as the beauty and advertisement industries calm castration anxieties stemming from sights of aging and imperfection by creating the illusion of flawless artificial femininity. To this end, they promote products and procedures aimed at vanishing blemishes, wrinkles, scars, cellulite dimples, and spots—anything that would disrupt perfectly smooth, glossy, forever young skin. Something similar happens in post-human Science Fiction: synthetic skin, eyes, and hair never have to shrivel up and die. In case of damage, they can be easily replaced. A robot’s immortal skin is a safe haven from unsightly creases and sags, wounds revealing the horrifying truth: the aged female body

is castrated, the imagined phallus isn't really there. The artificial woman—a literal one in this case—is thus not only an ideal, but also a fetish.

Leticia/Magnolia embodies yet another problematic beauty standard: her whiteness. Although this robot was built by a Japanese engineer and is part of series 46-ñip, an illogically Spanish denomination for Asian-made machines, she is a cybernetic clone of blonde, blue-eyed Kim Novak, has the height and brawn of a Nordic princess, and the singing voice of “las Walkirias” (57). As both protagonist and narrator, Lupus never ceases to praise his robot companion’s notoriously European physical attributes. He often refers to her as “guapa” (40), “hermosa” (48), “espléndida” (45), “toda una joyita” (56) and even “lo máximo” (59). The physical qualities of other young, stereotypically attractive female characters of varying ethnicities are also exalted throughout the novel. Nonetheless, it is Leticia/Magnolia, the “whitest” of them, who enjoys the most privileged position of them all, both socially and economically, and appears to be more publicly powerful and active²⁶. In addition, the erotization of minor female characters like the woman who stares at Lupus’ crotch while he moves the gun in his pocket (24) and La morena’s nurse lover is largely based upon these characters’ blonde, Europeanized physiques. Meanwhile, all other eroticized female characters (except for La morena) are ethnically neutral—any physical traits beyond the usual “busto prominente” and “nalgas magníficas” are conspicuously absent.

The boundless sexuality and tireless desire to have sex of female robots in *Que Dios se apiade* is a third standard elevating the artificial, homogenized woman over

²⁶ It could be argued that La morena, a more obscure character in Guzmán Wolffer’s novel, is more active and powerful within the private sphere. A more detailed comparison between these two female figures will be made in future sections of this chapter.

organic, pluralistic ones. The narrative reimagines brothels as filled with robotic prostitutes (60) and heterosexual male desire has shifted from organic to cybernetic fixations, leading to the emergence of “roboerotic” magazines (32) and new technologies designed to enhance sexual experiences between humans and humanoid machines (59-60). Even Leticia/Magnolia herself, a robot designed primarily for police investigations, had been originally ordered by a State official for the main purpose of fulfilling his own cyber-erotic fantasies:

Supuestamente el robot es para él. Hasta dejó a la esposa en su casa. Está como loco esperando a la robotita, totalmente enajenado. El otro día me mandó a comprar revistas roboeróticas. De esas en las que las robots fornican con personas, o con animales; es un degenerado. (32)

The National Director of Food Affairs appears to be a degenerate here. But is it because of his fondness for pornography or for robots? At first, the latter seems to be the case. The protagonist of *Que Dios se apiade*, himself, starts out emphatically repudiating sexual interactions between humans and robots:

sólo alguien trastornado podría considerarlos como objetos eróticos, para eso había muchas mujeres u hombres cuya escasa capacidad mental los situaba a igual o menor nivel que las máquinas, pero eran humanos finalmente. Fornicar con un robot, ja. Cualquier día se le meten a la tostadora. (34)

Yet, as the narrative unfolds and Lupus becomes more acquainted with Leticia/Magnolia, his initial abhorrence of sex with robots morphs into a lustful fixation. This becomes evident in the blatant sexual undertones present in most interactions between the two

characters. Here are some examples: After a run-of-the-mill lunch, Leticia/Magnolia offers Lupus her genitals as dessert (59). Similarly, during a secret surveillance mission, Lupus gives coded instructions to his robot companion by pressing his penis against her buttocks (80). In another scene, Lupus wakes Leticia/Magnolia after the latter has been accidentally deactivated by electrically stimulating her nipple (99). The robot's buttcheek is the first thing Lupus sees when he wakes up from surgery, and he discovers his finger replacement procedure was successful "gracias al reflejo de intentar tocársela" (102).

Lupus' sexual appetite for Leticia/Magnolia certainly seems insatiable, and once her character disappears from the story, he doesn't appear to have the same level of passion for human women. At the end of the novel, for instance, inspector Pérez Grieg invites Lupus to party with him and some human prostitutes, but he declines his superior's offer and goes home to mourn his now destructed robot partner in solitude (137). Although these human prostitutes are portrayed as enticing, Lupus has no trouble declining their favors when, previously, he could hardly resist Leticia/Magnolia's flirtations. What could make an artificial being more sexually attractive than an organic one? A machine's customizable and ever-ready-and-willing nature may be the answer.

Leticia/Magnolia is, above anything else, an irremediably libidinous character. After spending merely one day with Lupus, the robot voluntarily initiates a sexual encounter with him while he is taking a shower (44-45). Further on, Leticia/Magnolia pinches Lupus' crotch flirtatiously while they walk over to a government archive building. Lupus interprets this as a "silenciosa promesa de que [continuarían] también con otras cosas" (50), with the last two words being a fairly obvious sexual euphemism. The fembot dresses herself provocatively when she is at home with Lupus (56), and often

removes her clothing with the only purpose of sexually enticing her organic partner (44, 58). Her sexual appetite gets so out of hand that Lupus feels the need to personally consult Yáñez, the person in charge of ordering and delivering robot agents for the State, on the matter: “Vengo a consultarlo sobre el modelito que me dio, fíjese que se pasa todo el tiempo pensando en hacer el amor, tiene la mente como humana y se comporta como si quisiera enamorarme. Necesito entender lo que pasa” (59). Yáñez has nothing but technical answers to Lupus’ question: “Lo de que sea buena en la cama es muy comprensible, fíjese en estos diagramas; como puede ver, el modelo tiene células hipersensibles en las zonas erógenas que señala el dibujo, ha de ser movidísima a la hora de la hora, pero así está hecho el diseño” (59-60).

Lupus never describes Leticia/Magnolia’s sexual performance qualitatively, so Yáñez’ automatic assumption that she is “buena en la cama” points at a problematic representation of female sexualities. Equating “often” with “well” suggests that a desirable female sexual partner’s main—or perhaps only—qualifications are her willingness and availability. Recalling MacKinnon’s criticisms of modern, “pop” (patriarchal) sexuality, sex alone is, often, mistakenly equated with pleasure, especially for women (164). Similarly, MacKinnon warns against desirability standards raised by pornographic media, where “women men want, want men” (168). This reflects virtually all representations of attractive women in Guzmán Wolffer’s novel, who are always focused on sex in one way or another. Leticia/Magnolia seeks coitus from Lupus to no avail; La morena and the nurse engage sexually in almost every scene featuring them²⁷;

²⁷ While these two characters don’t “want men” as proposed by MacKinnon, they are still portrayed as the kind of sex-starved bombshells typically found in lesbian pornography aimed at heterosexual male audiences.

The secretary in one of the short stories by La morena rapes and then murders her boss for turning her down as a sex partner in the past; a random, sexy, blonde passerby stares at Lupus' crotch with interest; and the prostitutes, both human and robotic, make a living through sex. The construction of female sexualities in *Que Dios se apiade*, then, rests mainly upon libido and accessibility (to men), and female characters' erotic appeal is directly proportional to these variables for both cybernetic and organic beings. Following that logic, a machine that can be programmed to always say yes and which can never physically, mentally, or emotionally tire from having sex will, most likely, seem more appealing than a flesh-and-blood woman.

Additionally, and despite mentions of hypersensitive erogenous sensors in robots, pleasure in both artificial and organic female subjects is largely ignored.

Leticia/Magnolia's sexual initiatives, for example, seem to be aimed at pleasuring Lupus but not herself: The robot performs fellatio on him before engaging in any other sexual act (44-45), she grabs at his genitals (50), (heavily) hints at wanting to have sex with her partner on several occasions, but her experiences of pleasure are never articulated, described, or even suggested. As Jo Alyson Parker notes in her discussion of the female robot protagonist in a different literary work, Stanislaw Lem's "The Mask", "the robot lover makes responses that mirror in form those of the human lover. But like the Foucauldian theory with which it has affinities, Lem's story thereby neuters these desiring subjects, thus bypassing an exploration of the mechanisms of female desire" (185). This seems to be the exact same case in Guzmán Wolffer's novel, where the supposed desire so emphasized in Leticia/Magnolia is never fully fleshed out. Lupus is overtly and redundantly featured as the target of her desire, but her experience of desire itself is not

remotely acknowledged. She is only meant to provide pleasure but not receive it, as Yáñez himself confirms: “Eso del enamoramiento podría encuadrar en lo que el manual llama ‘el mejor servicio que podrá encontrarse jamás’” (60).

In regard to human characters, such as La morena, the nurse, and the meta-fictional secretary, accounts of sexual activity and presumed “pleasure” are shallow, repetitive, and clearly tailored to satisfy heterosexual male scopophilic pleasure. They are rife with brash, virtually pornographic depictions of heaving breasts, hard nipples, soft lips, and voluptuous hips and buttocks. And yet female genitalia are seldom brought into the picture. Similarly, the acts of showing and viewing are the main focus of major sex scenes, further confirming the hetero-male voyeuristic character of the text. This occurs, for example, during the most detailed encounter between la morena and her nurse lover, where the former “estaba boca abajo con las caderas levantadas, *mostrando* el ano y los labios vaginales” (29, my italics). Similarly, in another scene featuring a lesbian erotic exchange between members of the time-traveling cult, the male driver in their car acts as an avid spectator: “pon[e] atención en [sic] los sonidos de las mujeres” (36). Female sexual pleasure, then, is dictated by hegemonic scopophilic standards and, when not absent, one-dimensional at best for non-cybernetic characters in Guzmán Wolffer’s novel.

It is evident, then, that cybernetic “femaleness” in *Que Dios se apiade* is regarded as superior than its organic version. A fembot can flaunt physical features that human women could never attain. It will never grow old, and it can be built and programmed to bring wild, heteronormative sex fantasies to life in exchange for nothing. Within this narrative, then, sexuality appears to be the major factor defining value and even humanness in machines. Despite the few praises Lupus gives Leticia/Magnolia for her

analytical skills and unexpected sense of humor, it is the robot's sexual involvement with the male protagonist that makes him overcome the initial "uncanny valley" effect he experienced regarding humanoid machines. At the end of *Que Dios se apiade*, the lustful dynamics between Lupus and Leticia/Magnolia are hastily rebranded as "love," and a pseudo-philosophical soliloquy about love conquering all things ensues as Leticia/Magnolia "dies" when she jumps into a magic portal to stop the villain, Milton Rose, from reaching the world of the gods. Even then, however, this deus ex machina fails to convince us that love is the trait making Leticia/Magnolia human-like and endearing despite being a machine. Such "love" is almost entirely based on a series of gratuitous semi-pornographic events. As the robot's manual points out, Leticia/Magnolia was built to provide "excellent service." This is just a performance, the execution of a program designed to fulfill the user's wants, needs, and wildest desires.

It has been widely theorized, however, that traditional organic, human notions of "love"—and sex, and gender, and behavioral patterns—are all programmed and performed as well. Post-humanist narratives often explore this idea, that is, they play with the possibility of man-made bodies unbound by organic laws. And yet "these contemporary texts represent a future where human bodies are on the verge of becoming obsolete but sexuality nevertheless prevails" (Springer 35). This paradox is evident in *Que Dios se apiade*. A marked rigidity regarding feminine roles and behaviors is accompanied by surprising flexibility regarding its embodiment. Sexual innateness and so-called biological features become irrelevant. The idea, the experience, and the perception of sexuality are all that matters here. Anybody—and any kind of body—could potentially be a man or woman as long as the illusion of gender is executed well. Perhaps

the almost abhorrent intensity of that gender in the fembot, her excess flirtations, oversexualized body and coquettish gestures are all meant to make this illusion believable through overcompensation. One must concede that, in the end, Leticia/Magnolia does not make for a convincing woman. But neither do any of the human female characters in *Que Dios se apiade*. Leticia/Magnolia is as one-dimensional, stereotypical and cartoonish as the rest of the women. While Guzmán Wolffer's representation of female characters would be better left for the comic book or soft-core porn genres, Leticia/Magnolia's overall performance of womanhood is consistent with the (deficient) idea of femininity presented in the novel.

La Morena: A "Natural" Body Rejected by Technology

La Morena is perhaps the most interesting and complex character in *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*. As a Black lesbian, she stands out in a narrative where heterosexuality and Europeanized features are the favored standards for female characters. Although her job is far from lucrative—she works as an archive clerk for the State—La Morena is financially independent, lives alone in an apartment of her own, and is portrayed neither as economically nor socially desperate or destitute. Her love life, while somewhat secretive, is thriving. Moreover, a considerable portion of the novel is dedicated to her daily ritual of writing short stories and the scenarios she envisions based on the murder case files she sorts at the State archive. And yet this character is virtually disconnected from the main plot, which renders her actions, intriguing literary creations, and fatal destiny inconsequential to the narrative as a whole. Unlike Leticia/Magnolia, the

cybernetic heroine, La Morena doesn't even have a name²⁸, just a racially evocative nickname.

Despite being a human character and the lack of integration between her storyline and the novel's main plot, La Morena becomes important when viewed next to Leticia/Magnolia, with whom she forms clear binary oppositions on various levels. The first and perhaps most obvious contrast between the two is the cybernetic vs. organic issue. La Morena's ethnicity becomes especially significant here, as black female bodies have been traditionally used as a symbol of "the natural body" and, as such, her figure is "a racial other, associated with the body in opposition to technology" (Fernbach 167). Whereas Leticia/Magnolia represents a literal and perfect embodiment of technology, La Morena ultimately becomes a body rejected and destroyed by technology: her computer kills her as soon as she finishes typing her last short story, a horror narrative (Guzmán Wolffer 116). Later on, her lover finds a collection of floppy disks containing images of La Morena's body, first full of life and sexual energy, then suddenly lifeless and fragmented (127), as if the machine had eaten up her corpse. Even when pitted against her desktop computer, La morena is presented as an Other in relation to technology: "La computadora y sus signos brillantes en la pantalla interrogaban las manos morenas, con hambre de palabras" (114). Notice how the machine is not only the subject in this sentence, but also a humanized entity who can question others and feel hunger.

²⁸ It is significant that, while the female robot has not one but two names, all other women characters (except for Mirth Rose, the dead woman whose case Lupus investigates) remain nameless and are only referred to based on their professions (La enfermera, La cocinera, or Las prostitutas) or their physical features (such as La rubia and La Morena).

Conversely, La Morena is downgraded from person to isolated body parts, at the mercy of the seemingly voracious computer.

Yet another significant contrast between Leticia/Magnolia and La Morena is that of White vs. Black, especially in regard to female sexualities. Both characters are presented as extremely libidinous: Leticia/Magnolia seeks sex from Lupus around the clock and La Morena engages sexually with La enfermera, her partner, each time the latter two are featured together in a scene of the novel. Nonetheless, La Morena's body is more frequently and overtly fetishized and fragmented than Leticia/Magnolia's.

Whenever La Morena appears in the narrative, there is a gratuitous abundance of “labios carnosos” (21, 127), “prominente busto” (21, 28), “nalgas grandiosas” (22, 28, 29, 33), “senos desnudos” (28, 29, 36) “pezones” (36, 39), and “desnudez” (96). Additionally, both sexual and non-sexual physical features are often used as metonyms for her character. Expressions such as “las manos morenas” (28, 114) or “los cabellos negros” (73) are often her only referents. Patricia Hill Collins identifies Western perspectives on Black female body parts—especially primary and secondary sexual features—as historically infused with ideas of commodification that link Black women to (potential) prostitution: “current portrayals of Black women in popular culture—reducing Black women to butts—works to reinscribe these commodified body parts” (133). As in the case of Sarah Bartmann²⁹, “the Hottentot Venus,” La Morena is undeniably “reduced to her sexual parts” (Hill Collins 137). And much like Bartmann's body after death, La

²⁹ Sarah Bartmann was a South African woman exhibited around Europe as a freak show attraction in the nineteenth century. Denominated the “Hottentot Venus,” Bartmann was taken on tours where rich audiences paid fees to see her nude body. Features such as her buttocks, breasts, and genitals were considered highly exotic for their unfamiliar size and shape. After her death, Bartmann's remains were dissected and continued to be publicly displayed for wealthy European viewers' entertainment (Hill Collins 136-37).

Morena's features are showcased one by one, as if dissected, for exotic visual pleasure and entertainment above anything else. The compulsive mentions of her nude breasts or the size of her buttocks are completely inconsequential to the narrative or the character's agency, yet they recur pervasively. Voyeurism, then, is what seems to drive the inclusion of La Morena in *Que Dios se apiade*. Not only in regard to her race, but also her sexuality.

In her readings of (techno) fetishes in contemporary pop culture, Amanda Fernbach asserts that "lesbian fantasies are a staple of heterosexual erotic iconography" (77). It is not surprising, then, that the lesbian sub-narrative in Guzmán Wolffer's novel should be constructed under hetero-male-centric parameters. Bringing to the fore a non-heteronormative relationship rivaling that of the two (stereotypically heterosexual) main characters may, on the surface, seem laudable. But upon closer inspection, the passionate romance between La Morena and La enfermera turns out to be more of a Cinemax softcore-style garnish than the thought-provoking subplot it had the potential to be. Just as the depictions of Leticia/Magnolia's sexual activity, the scenes featuring encounters between La Morena and her lover are extremely graphic and tailored to satisfy male voyeuristic desires. Fragmentation also permeates these passages. Metonyms such as "los cabellos rubios" (39), "el uniforme blanco" (126), "las curvas y los pezones" (126), and "la lengua mojada" (127) reference the lesbian characters instead of nouns or pronouns designating a whole woman. Although the acts of touching passionately and cunnilingus are frequently emphasized in the scenes between La Morena and the nurse, their specific experience of pleasure—other than vague mentions of "placer" (29, 128) and "prolongado éxtasis" (128)—is not discussed. The visual aspects of these activities are

highlighted instead. This strictly voyeuristic construction of lesbianism differs jarringly from those in other Spanish-language lesbian Science Fiction narratives, such as *Planeta Hembra* (2001) by Gabriela Bustelo. Although Bustelo's work also features statuesque female characters, her novel does not eschew women-centric depictions and explorations of female pleasure and, instead, puts them at the center of the narrative³⁰. *Que Dios se apiade*, meanwhile, favors the (heteronormative) male gaze through and through, as if male-oriented visual depictions of sex and female-oriented sensorial descriptions of it were mutually exclusive.

Evidently, La Morena's characterization as a sexy lesbian with a hearty sexual appetite is a gratuitous element in the narrative, or what is commonly known in the comic-book and science fiction genres as "fan service." Nevertheless, this trait further strengthens her contrasting relationship to Leticia/Magnolia, who despite being a machine behaves in a staunchly heterosexual fashion. And while both characters are described as very sexually active, their erotic interactions occur in opposite contexts: Leticia/Magnolia is very public with her flirtations and affections, while La Morena is extremely private about hers. The robot grabs her partner's genitals in a public parking lot (Guzmán Wolffer 50) and does not object to his attempt to touch her sexually while they are in a hospital room, in the presence of doctors and nurses (102). Similarly, both she and Lupus make it clear to other characters, such as the antagonistic researcher Stex,

³⁰ In chapter forty-six, for example, Báez—the heroine—and her friend Alva go to Clitty, a nightclub where female performers and strippers perform for an all-female audience. The main act, a woman who calls herself Bang Bang, shows the audience how she can achieve orgasm without any sort of physical stimulation: "Los jadeos de la Hembra [sic], entrecortados y guturales, alcanzaron un cénit. Al ritmo de una cascada de gemidos agudos, un chorro de flujo intermitente salió de su vagina y mojó el suelo del escenario, dejando un pequeño charco entre sus zapatos azules" (Bustelo 142). Curiously, the obsessive-compulsive mentions of breasts and butts so prevalent in Guzmán Wolffer's novel are absent here. And yet, the scene successfully communicates female pleasure.

that they are in an exclusive romantic relationship and therefore the fembot is off-limits to other men (70, 85). Conversely, La Morena and her partner do not disclose their relationship with any other characters. Every one of their encounters occur behind closed doors and generally late at night, when their contact is less likely to be noticed. All of their sexual interactions are set in La Morena's apartment, with the exception of their first time together, which occurs in an empty, closed exam room at the hospital where the nurse works (29). Additionally, after La Morena is found dead in her apartment and her body is removed by the police, no scenes depict the nurse being notified of the incident nor being interrogated about it, as would be customary with significant others in possible homicide cases. She is simply left to discover an empty apartment and images of her lover's lifeless body on a floppy disk. Even after such dire events, the lesbian relationship between La Morena and the nurse must remain a secret. It is perhaps ironic that in a reality set nearly a century after this novel was written, where machines have become indistinguishable from humans and present-day illicit activities such as prostitution and drug use are not only legal but also ubiquitous, non-heteronormative sexualities should still be depicted as taboo.

Fernbach observes, in reference to Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, that what she calls the "phallic woman"—one who challenges male ownership of desire and feels equal or superior to men—is ultimately punished by death for daring to refuse the male gazes upon her and for desiring the feminine (62). Similarly, N. Katherine Hayles interprets the (gruesome) death of Lisa in John Varley's "Press Enter" as punishment for challenging male figures of power and usurping "the masculine role of [computer] penetration" in her activities as a highly effective hacker (168). In this sense, and for the same reasons, La

morena shares the same fate as Salome and Lisa. First, she rebuffs sexual advances and abuses from men (22, 28-29) and then, refuses to be a passive object of desire; instead, she actively constructs her experience of pleasure and desire in opposition to hegemonic parameters. In a world where men are the policy-making and enforcing “licenciados” while women remain their wives, secretaries, prostitutes, and cooks, La Morena creates and dictates the rules for her own worlds, which she constructs through writing. The agency this character gains by writing stories—some of which could be construed as anti-chauvinistic³¹—and by using computer technology to her own advancement puts her in a privileged position close to that of male characters. However, no good deed goes unpunished. As an adversary to all hegemonic values due to her ethnicity, sexuality, and non-compliance with monolithic gender standards, La Morena is ultimately killed off abruptly and inconsequentially. After her death, everything related to this character—her body, her lover, and even the stories she crafted—virtually disappears. All that remains are vapid sexual remarks: “¿Y la nalgona del archivo?” asks Lupus, to which Pérez Grieg simply replies “se murió, tal vez de lo buena que estaba” (138).

Intriguingly, La Morena is not the only phallic woman to end this way in *Que Dios se apiade*: the nurse and Leticia/Magnolia also find unsavory deaths as retribution for defying hegemonic heteronormative codes. The nurse, who dared initiate the lesbian relationship between herself and La Morena, dies painfully and gruesomely, stabbed and

³¹ One of the meta-fictions written by La morena focuses on a vindictive secretary who tortures, rapes, and kills her boss for not acknowledging her as a suitable sexual partner during the many years they worked together. The secretary threatens to kill her boss if he cannot satisfy her sexually within the span of three hours, after which poisonous gas is set to fill his hermetically-sealed apartment. In the end, she leaves him to die in the lethal cloud while she escapes unharmed (36-39). Although this appears to be a basic—and stereotypical—metaphor for female retaliation against male hegemony, one cannot help but laugh at such a reductive version of “feminist” fiction writing: angry sex to hurt men.

raped by multiple floppy disks and then electrocuted by La Morena's computer, perhaps as punishment for masturbating to electronic images of her lover's body immediately before her own demise (127-128). Separately, Leticia/Magnolia, despite fully adhering to hegemonic gender roles and sexualities, ends up outsmarting all male characters and figuring out how to defeat the evil Milton Rose. She steals the "hero" spotlight from Lupus, and then must die. But the fembot sidekick dies as a sort of martyr: she jumps into the same cosmic portal as the villain, rips his head off, but then has all of her insides crushed beyond repair as her reward for saving the world from a crazed, time-traveling wizard. Contrarily, the prostitutes, the "ugly" cook, and all other female characters not challenging hetero-male hegemony, remain alive.

Killing off phallic and sexually unfettered female characters is not a rare occurrence in the science fiction genre. In *Blade Runner*, Pris and Zhora, both replicants—machine organisms indistinguishable from humans—who explore their sexualities openly and to their own (monetary) gain, die violently at the hands of über masculine protagonist Deckard. In contrast, Rachel—a far more virginal, sexually repressed replicant—not only lives on but is protected by Deckard himself, despite his instructions to destroy all replicants who have illegally infiltrated human-only areas. Similarly, in Fritz Lang's silent-era classic *Metropolis*, the sexually liberated, extroverted, mechanical Maria is burned at the stake for being a "witch," while the chaste, motherly, human Maria is spared. The old and tired virgin vs. whore binary finds a safe haven within Science Fiction. And while *Que Dios se apiade* does not represent this opposition in an exact literal sense (the prostitutes are, after all, among the few female characters not killed in the end), the phallic woman's inevitable punishment

definitely holds true here. While the “whore” is no longer a prostitute but a woman who owns her own sexuality and defies patriarchal codes, the “virgin” can in fact be a total whore. So long as she does not challenge patriarchy and lets it control her body (and sexuality), she remains a saint.

Section Conclusion

Nineteen years after Araya’s “Minerva,” the idea of a perfected femininity achievable through cybernetics returns in Guzmán Wolffer’s work. The idea continues to be problematic. It proposes a singular, rigid standard for female perfection that relies on Europeanness, youth, heterosexuality, unrelenting sexual availability, and submission to men. But while Araya’s work focuses on the commodification of women, Guzmán Wolffer’s novel conveys (perhaps unintentionally) another disturbing message: women’s individuality, complexity, and clear-cut identities cannot exist, not even in the technologized world of tomorrow. Whenever these aspects are not downplayed and muddled through compulsive oversexualization of female characters, they are obscured by negative characterizations based on ageism and prejudice against bodies that do not adhere to impossibly high, impractical beauty standards. The majority of human female characters are not presented as individual subjects but instead made to appear all the same, as if mass-produced: young, libidinous, big-breasted, big-butt, smooth-lipped, taut-skinned and, above all, nameless. In contrast, the cybernetic female, a—both literally and symbolically—male-constructed embodiment of womanhood, is highlighted as unique, special, and ideal. Patriarchally-programmed gender is presented as more desirable. In the end, however, Guzmán Wolffer cannot be blamed fully for following what is an already normal trend in global science fiction and his other influencing genre,

the comic book. Nonetheless, his depiction of gendered machines, human-robot “love,” and the construction of femininities throughout *Que Dios se apiade* further confirms what Parker and other critics had suspected all along: “the robot’s experience of gender allows us to see that what we regard as intrinsic male and female responses may be determined instead by cultural programming” (179).

“Samantha”: Clone Nightmares in Suburbia

This short story, by Argentinean author Alicia Suárez, first appeared in 1970 as part of the *Primera Antología De La Ciencia-ficción Latinoamericana*, edited by Rodolfo Alonso. “Samantha” tells the story of a woman who is afflicted by a mysterious inability to recall significant aspects of her past. She lives in a large estate in the countryside with her husband, Leonard, who takes care of her during her convalescence. As the story progresses, it is revealed that Leonard is building an exact robotic copy of Samantha to help her with tedious household chores and keep her company. The protagonist, however, grows wary of her cybernetic doppelganger, fearing that her double might somehow usurp her place in her home and marriage. One night, Samantha finds herself lying in one of the beds in Leonard’s laboratory with no recollection of how she got there. She notices her robotic clone in a bed across from hers. When she pulls away the blanket covering the android she realizes the bed is empty. Leonard and a woman identical to Samantha walk in, he pulls a remote control from his pocket and, with the click of a button, the “Samantha” we have followed so far in the narrative turns into a servile automaton who can only utter a numb, soulless “sí, señora.”

Albeit short, “Samantha” blends a suspenseful psychologically-twisted narrative with a poetic style that, in terms of formal sophistication, easily surpasses those of the

previously analyzed works by Araya and Guzmán Wolffer. Suárez' story is descriptive but economical in its depictions. Visual clues are kept to a minimum, gratuitousness is (refreshingly) absent, and sensorial experiences regarding hearing, touch, taste, and especially smell are all strategically highlighted. This focus on non-visual senses is used throughout to effectively evoke different atmospheres. Constant mentions of sweet floral smells carried by the breeze³², bare feet walking in fields, and warm hands joining together all hint at an idyllic summer countryside setting, a space for freedom and romance. Alternatively, there is a scene that suggests a contrastingly eerie atmosphere: the title character ends up alone and “muy quieta en su camilla” while “zumban las máquinas y ronronean”, “está oscuro,” and there is a mysterious “bulto inmóvil” on the bed right next to hers (6). The laboratory, filled with a plethora of strange gears and cables, “frascos de cristal”, “tubos conteniendo líquidos y cosas desconocidas”, and “los muebles con los misterios tras sus puertas”, surrounded by “el arrullo, el tintinear, el golpeteo, el rodar de las máquinas sudando aceite” (5) is constructed as a space where fears and nightmares can dwell and, ultimately, come true.

Sensorial depictions in “Samantha” also emphasize the experience of physical pleasure by the female protagonist, an aspect largely absent from previously analyzed works. The verb “rozar,” for example, is one of the most recurrent ones throughout the narrative. It is often used to denote pleasurable tactile sensations, especially in daytime scenes: “el fresco aliento de la brisa roza la piel de los hombros, estremece su garganta”, “la brisa sabiendo a duraznos roza las manos de Samantha; acaricia su pecho, aletea en su

³² Olfactory descriptions are, by far, the most prominent in this short story. These include: “dejó que la esencia de la tarde perfumada penetrara en el cuarto” (4), “la brisa lleva el aroma de la flor, la corteza y los pastos húmedos” (4), “la brisa perfumada de naranjos y jazmines, perfumada de madera y mar y follaje y muros y raíces” (4) “el perfume de los primeros capullos abiertos junto a las paredes blancas” (4), etc.

cintura” (4). Conversely, “rozar” takes on a more sinister meaning when used in passages set at night: “Se ha estremecido. Casi creyó que los largos dedos amasadores de seres-perfectos-con-vida-no-humanos, hubiese rozado sus hombros”, “la mano desciende, desciende, se detiene; desciende otra vez y roza la superficie de la camilla” (6). It is also worth noting that, unlike Araya’s and Guzmán Wolfffer’s respective narratives, Suárez’s text does not feature any explicit sexual interactions amongst its characters. Nonetheless, certain scenes are imbued with arguably sexual/sensual undertones, for example:

Había dos camillas. Samantha se acercó, los párpados cubrieron sus pupilas y pudo entonces oír el ronroneo de las máquinas. El arrullo, el tintinear, el golpeteo, el rodar de las máquinas sudando aceite. Y pudo imaginar las manos, las largas manos de piel dorada, vigorosas y sensitivas, trabajar sobre su cuerpo copiando sus miembros, sus manos, su rostro. (5)

Suárez’s is the only narrative of the three explored in this chapter where the female robot character’s perspective is brought to the fore. Although the text uses the third-person point of view, the thoughts, emotions, and fears of the ambiguous protagonist—at times a woman, at times a machine—are at the heart of the narrative.

The female robot in Suárez’s story does, nonetheless, share a few traits in common with Minerva and Leticia/Magnolia. Samantha is young and, most likely, Caucasian. Although her body is not described in great detail, expressions like “largos muslos elásticos” (4) and “ojos [...] tan dorados como la tarde en que se habían encontrado bajo el sol y él había advertido que no eran verdes, sino del color del oro” (4) give the impression that Samantha’s figure is tall, slender, firm, and Europeanized. Similarly, all of the names used in the narrative (Samantha, Leonard, Mrs. Brand) are

English, thus suggesting the Anglicized nature of all the characters. And much like the previously analyzed robot characters—especially Minerva—Samantha is characterized as an affluent housewife who never has to struggle with economic turmoil or social ostracism. Samantha herself, however, is never presented as an ideal specimen of womanhood in the ways Minerva and Leticia/Magnolia are. Even then, robotic Samantha still appears as a perfected version of her human counterpart. Synthetic womanhood still has the upper hand.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Suárez's narrative is its ambiguity. A superficial reading of "Samantha" will leave the reader believing the protagonist had been a robot who mistakenly thought she was human all along. Her lack of memories, cluelessness, and the long periods she spends "asleep" in Leonard's laboratory are all easy clues to this particular interpretation. Nonetheless, a more detailed analysis of the text reveals a far more disturbing reading: The human Samantha has had her brain modified without her knowledge, thus clouding her memories and judgment until her autonomy is lost and her actions become entirely dictated by Leonard's remote control. Meanwhile, ageless robot Samantha has taken her place, something Leonard had planned from the start.

The story's opening line is "savia joven en sus venas y calor en sus entrañas" (Suárez 4), a recurring motif throughout the text. Initially, this phrase comes to Samantha through a mysterious whisper while she is alone at night. This happens immediately after Leonard has been in the room and given her a clear, greenish liquid to drink (4). These disembodied words recur the following evening, after Samantha returns home from a stroll around the fields with Leonard. Although alone at the time, Samantha hears the

mysterious utterance shortly after eavesdropping on Leonard talking to himself near the house, saying: “Es una noche muy hermosa. Como aquella noche que supe iba a construirla y reí, reí...” (5). Finally, the words “savia joven” begin looping endlessly in Samantha’s head as she becomes numb and drowsy from drinking the clear, minty liquid Leonard keeps giving her. They are all she can make out from Leonard’s whispers blended with the buzzing of machines as she drifts into unconsciousness (6).

The recurrence of this phrase hints at a fixation. “Savia joven,” obviously, refers to physical youth. The meaning of “calor en sus entrañas,” however, is more ambiguous. It could imply both fertility and libido. Leonard can easily be assumed as the author of these words: they are always heard when he is nearby, and they refer to an other. Thus, considering this character’s overt excitement at the possibility of building a cybernetic version of Samantha, who would clearly not be fertile, the second interpretation of “calor en sus entrañas” would be the most fitting one here. This obsession with creating a young, libidinous version of Samantha, in addition to constantly forcing the female protagonist into long, deep slumber with the aid of the nameless clear, minty liquid (ostensibly chloroform), as well as the engineer’s disturbing laughing at his own ideas, strongly suggest that Leonard’s intentions are rather sinister. He insists that the robot he is making is for his wife, but as the narrative unfolds it becomes clearer that he is making it for himself and that, perhaps, there is room for only one Samantha in his house: the newer, “better” one.

Samantha’s initial curiosity about her robot counterpart quickly turns into fear. “Quiero verla, Leonard. Quiero” (4), says the protagonist at the start, enthusiastically asking her husband to take her to the laboratory where he keeps the android. But once

they return home from Leonard's lab, Samantha's mind is plagued with fears of what could happen once her cybernetic clone is activated: "¿Qué iría a ocurrir ahora o después, en algún momento en la casa, con aquella "mujer"? Era como si no fuese un robot. Un ser humano, un perfecto ser humano. Samantha temió por ella" (5). The protagonist is aware that the robot could do many jobs around the house in her stead, but she refuses to be completely replaced: "cocinará por mí, lavará por mí; pero yo cortaré las flores y sumergiré sus tallos en los jarrones de cristal, yo lo haré" (6). On a personal level, Samantha's fear of her double can be explained through Freud's concept of the uncanny. Doubles, who first appear during early-childhood,

have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which holds sway in the mind of the child as in that of the primitive man; and when this stage has been left behind the double takes on a different aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death. (Freud 9).

On a more general level, fear of robot clones replacing humans has been a staple of Science Fiction—especially in film form—for years, and it can be interpreted as apprehension toward humans' potential disappearance and possible synthetic (mass) production in a highly technologized future (Telotte 19). In particular, replacing organic housewives with "perfect" robot/automaton clones under the full complicity of their husbands has been explored in both Latin American and Anglo literary and film contexts, through works such as Felisberto Hernández' *Las hortensias* (1949), Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives* (1972), and Bryan Forbes' 1975 film adaptation of the latter.

Although “Samantha” appeared a few years before both the novel and the film adaptation of *The Stepford Wives*, some parallels can be traced between the two stories. In her study of Forbes’ film, Anna Krugoyov Silver suggests that equating housewives to robots is a common theme in second wave feminism, which emphasizes “the monotonous, robotic nature of housework” (66). The way both (human and robot) Samanthas are presented exemplifies this idea as well: their jobs are limited to household chores, entertaining guests, and obeying Leonard. Moreover, Samantha’s character is only allowed to move freely inside the home. In the only scenes where she is outside, her husband is permanently accompanying and watching her. This goes along with Krugoyov Silver’s assertion that, in robotic-wife narratives such as *The Stepford Wives*, the binary opposition between private sphere as woman’s space and public sphere as man’s space is exaggerated to criticize its arbitrariness (65). Additionally, Krugoyov Silver identifies a parallel between the spaces and film framing in Forbes’ film adaptation and a jailhouse (67). A similar analogy of the home as a confining place for women can be found in Suárez’s text. The house is presented as eerily similar to a mental hospital: everything is white; the main character is often quarantined in a laboratory and kept in a hospital bed while undergoing various procedures that may be altering her mind; she is repeatedly forced to drink a medicine-like concoction that leaves her unconscious; her memories start disappearing after all the “scientific” interventions on her body and, ultimately, her brain is permanently linked to a remote control. The robotic Samantha Leonard builds, with “savia joven y calor en sus entrañas” is probably the same as the prototypical Stepford wives described by Krugoyov Silver: “beautiful objects bought with the deaths

of the human wives³³, with no subjectivities of their own” (73). These shared criticisms align with many of the second wave feminist views cited by Krugoyov Silver (Betty Friedan, Pat Mainardi, among others)³⁴.

Nevertheless, one trait that separates “Samantha” from Levi’s/Forbe’s works and similar ones is its marked ambiguity. Despite strong clues that the organic Samantha has been drugged and mentally altered with technological implants to act as a machine and let her robotic counterpart take her place, it is never fully clear that this is actually the case. Several posthumanist authors have theorized that both memory and the experience of spontaneous emotion are long established measures of humanness in various Science Fiction narratives, from *Star Trek* to *Robocop* and *Blade Runner* (Elaine Graham 140, Liu 44, Silverman 117, Springer 46). In “Samantha,” the protagonist’s enjoyment of sensorial pleasures, her intense experience of fear, and the changes in her ability to recall important memories clearly (which deteriorates further after each chloroform-induced slumber) all suggest that she was originally an organic human being. However, there are other clues that confound this theory: the mechanical noises she sometimes hears in her head, her constantly mentioned inability to perceive “el olor del tiempo,” and the second Samantha’s—the one that remains as the wife at the end—completely spontaneous, non-robotic behavior. And yet, there is a suspicious complicity between Leonard and the woman posing as his wife in the end. His “fue perfecto, todo fue perfecto querida” and her “¿Se acostumbrará?” reinforce, once again, the idea that this was a malevolent plan to

³³ While the human Samantha is not truly dead at the end of the story, it can be argued that her subjectivity is deceased: she no longer has a will or emotions of her own, and her actions are all dictated by Leonard’s remote control.

³⁴ There is also an evident chronological closeness between the two robot wife clone narratives and this feminist era. Therefore, it is likely that Second Wave feminism—specifically criticisms of marriage and gendered division of labor—had a strong influence on Suarez’ work as well.

usurp organic Samantha's place in the home and she will now have to get used to being an inescapably submissive servant. Regardless of particular interpretations of the story, one thing is undeniable: Suárez's ambiguous writing audaciously distorts—and perhaps destroys—the boundaries between organic and artificial, original and copy, self and other.

Despite sharing the same general theme with Araya's and Guzmán Wolffer's narratives—a cybernetic woman created by a man to satisfy heteronormative wants and desires—, Suárez's short story stands out for exposing the disturbing aspects of this long-established science fiction trope. Her narrative also gives subjectivity to the usually objectified female robot character by putting her words and ideas at the center and delving into her experience of pleasure without resorting to the distasteful, almost pornographic, fetishization of the female body that Araya, Guzmán Wolffer, and countless other Science Fiction authors have traditionally favored. And yet, it cannot be said with certainty whether the protagonist of "Samantha" is a robot or a human. Suárez collapses both categories in such ways that, no matter how her text is interpreted, the main character can be read as either a very humanized robot or a very robotic human. Such hybridization has also been identified in other science fiction texts. In her reading of *Blade Runner*, N. Katherine Hayles asserts that "humans are becoming more like androids, just like androids are becoming more like them," all as a result of technological hubris and humankind's excessive reliance on technology (171). Similarly, Thomas Foster finds a similar hybridizing process in Richard Calder's *Dead Girls* (1992): teenage girls are infected with a virus that systematically turns them into vampiric robot-like creatures by fusing hardware (the organic body) and software (the cybernetic virus), a

trope Foster denominates “hardwiring.” For Foster, “this version of hardwiring girls with the characteristics of gynoids merely literalizes the construction of a traditional male fantasy about femininity” (112). “Samantha” conveys both this criticism of male-constructed “robotic” femininity—as well as compulsory domesticity—and warns against technology’s potential to reinforce and (re)produce gender inequality³⁵. While doing so, Suárez’s narrative exposes the artificiality of what Elaine Graham terms “ontological hygiene”: the socially and linguistically constructed boundaries that separate organic and cybernetic, natural and cultural, human and non-human (35). The very outlines and standards defining what is natural, male or female, human, or even real, may all be as unstable and uncertain as Samantha’s origin.

Chapter Conclusion

Despite having been written by different authors from different countries at different points in history, the three narratives analyzed in this chapter exhibit several distinctive common traits. The physical characteristics of female robot characters in these texts are very uniform. They highlight youth, exaggerated physical fitness, and European ethnic features. The latter is especially problematic within the Latin American context. It erases historically significant mestizo, indigenous, and African ethnicities from the post-human discussion. Some theorists see cyborgs and similar technologically-enhanced beings as the next link in the evolutionary chain (Hayles 157). In this sense, all Latin American Science Fiction texts explored here are, in a way, proposing—or perhaps

³⁵ Of course, this version of gender inequality is not without problems, as it only takes white, middle-class, Anglicized subjects and contexts into account. Nevertheless, it is commendable for a 1970s Argentine science fiction author to at least bring this simplified version of gender inequality into the picture in a genre that, universally, tends to overlook—and often conflicts with—important gender and sexualities issues.

foreshadowing—a whitewashed future where the traditionally hegemonic European (and more recently American) world powers will inevitably take over. Similarly, the compulsive equating of these white, young, fit robots to the “perfect” woman may be symptomatic of the overwhelming influence of cultural and economic products from predominantly white developed nations. Some of these characters are even portrayed as blatant facsimiles of Hollywood starlets, as is the case with Leticia/Magnolia and 1950’s bombshell Kim Novak. The Europeanized characterization of these cybernetic protagonists could also be read as a product of unresolved—and perhaps completely unintentional—racism stemming from colonial trauma³⁶. And yet Araya, Guzmán Wolffer, and Suárez are not entirely at fault here. After all, international Science Fiction as a genre—and especially its very English-dominant canon—tends to be aimed at chiefly white-male audiences, following similar representation practices. As Thomas Foster aptly put it, “technological forms of embodiment can denaturalize sexist or racist stereotypes while at the same time intensifying their negative effects” (112).

“Minerva,” *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*, and “Samantha” also share some points in common regarding the psychological and behavioral representations of female robot characters. All of their cybernetic protagonists exist with the purpose of fulfilling the (often shallow) whims and desires of staunchly heterosexual organic male characters. However, while some of these protagonists are highly fetishized, others (Samantha, for example) escape the hyper-sexualized, chauvinistic representations of female subjects that are so typical of this genre³⁷. The subjectivity of these characters

³⁶ Much could be said about the (post) colonial implications of these and more Latin American post-humanist science fiction texts. This topic, however, is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

³⁷ “In the familiar scenario where future technology has become so sophisticated as to make possible the creation of the perfect woman, the result is often an ultra-feminine, hypersexy, artificial playmate designed

varies from author to author as well. In Suárez's short story, the psyche and sensorial experiences of the ambiguously cybernetic protagonist, Samantha, are the core of the narrative, and gratuitous elements for hetero-male reader pleasure are absent—Samantha is, through and through, a subject. Meanwhile, both Araya's and Guzmán Wolffer's texts are saturated with stereotypical fetishistic imagery of the female body that inevitably depicts female characters as objects³⁸. The subjectivity of the female protagonist in Araya's short story is, literally, a mere illusion made possible by technological means. In Guzmán Wolffer's case, the robot protagonist is vested with more subjectivity than any of the organic female characters in the novel. This is problematic, as it suggests that an artificial woman constructed under patriarchal parameters is more deserving of subjectivity than her human counterparts. Nonetheless, this is not surprising of a text so influenced by genres such as pulp literature and superhero comics.

Despite these clichés, the subtexts in these works can be surprisingly fascinating. Under heavy layers of fan service, the lesbian subplot in *Que Dios se apiade* raises intriguing points about the ways non-hegemonic sexualities may still face challenges in otherwise highly advanced societies. Similarly, the triangular dynamics between Eduardo, Anastasio and Minerva in Araya's text easily give way to queer readings that reveal the artificiality of gender and the effectiveness of its performance above all other, so-called "natural" markers. Beyond traditional feminist critiques of its time, Suárez's

to fulfill a male fantasy, like Cherry in *Cherry 2000* (1987), and Lisa in *Weird Science* (1985)" (Fernbach 135)

³⁸ Foster explains this as the literary reflection of a traditional male fantasy of control over women: "the mechanical woman represents a femininity safely under male control and therefore the possibility of dispensing with actual women, in a classically fetishistic operation" (98). Fernbach also identifies this fantasy as a product of classical—or Freudian—fetishism: "The male desire to construct a perfect ideal woman by artificial means is science-fiction material, but it is also the fantasy of Freud's fetishist" (135)

narrative also exposes the artificiality of concepts commonly perceived as static and innate, such as the liminal boundaries between self and other and what constitutes humanness.

Critics like Haraway, Springer, Fernbach, and Hayles identify disembodiment as the most logical trend in post-humanist Science Fiction narratives. Science, too, sees the disappearance of the human body as an upcoming step in scientific development: “there will be no genders in the mobile computers that will retain human mental functions on software once the human body becomes obsolete” (Hans Moravec, paraphrased in Springer 41). And yet, as evidenced in the small sample analyzed in this chapter, Science Fiction narratives continue to be plagued by extremely gendered bodies and performances. Why can’t we let go of the body? For some, it is a sign that “patriarchy continues to uphold gender difference” in popular culture and literature (Springer 41). For others, sexual identity and gender are important in Science Fiction “as the primary markers of difference in a world otherwise beyond our norms” (Bergstrom 39). Perhaps the human body itself is simply another frontier which, much like outer space, is still too vast, mysterious, and awaiting to be explored through both science and, for the time being, science fiction. In any case, there is still hope that post-humanist works of Science Fiction, both in Latin America and other regions, will evolve from hegemonic representations of embodiment and gender to more fluid and progressive accounts of (post) human sexualities.

Indeed, alternate sexual dynamics, identities, and embodiments, as well as non-male gazes are being increasingly represented in recent English-language Science Fiction, with practices such as objectum sexuality, bondage and sadomasochism, and

transsexuality becoming more common and challenging the accustomed heteronormativity of the genre (Fernbach 10, Foster 108, Springer 43). These trends are also emerging in Latin American Science Fiction, especially among female authors such as Elena Aldunate, Ilda Cádiz Ávila, and Angélica Gorodischer, among others. The next chapter of this dissertation will continue the discussion on post-human gender and sexualities through analyses of masculine and queer robot figures in works by these and similar Science Fiction writers from Chile, Argentina, and Mexico. Maybe then will the questions of why the gendered body persists in this genre and how these post-human representations make Latin American Science Fiction unique find more definite answers.

Chapter 3: Romancing the Android

If your failure to distinguish correctly between human and machine proves that machines can think, what does it prove if you fail to distinguish woman from man? Why does gender appear in this primal scene of humans meeting their evolutionary successors, intelligent machines? What do gendered bodies have to do with the erasure of embodiment and the subsequent merging of machine and human intelligence in the figure of the cyborg?"

(N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*)

1950 was, undoubtedly, a turning point for science fiction worldwide. Not only did it start a decade when writers' imaginations, fueled by post-war issues, ran wild into "an explosion of publishing" for the genre (Gunn 28). It was also the year Alan Turing published his renowned essay "Computer Machinery and Intelligence," the first public account of the much celebrated—and replicated—Turing Test. This experiment, in which participants interact with a computer interface through a series of questions and answers, tests a person's ability to distinguish between human and artificial intelligence—or so it is popularly believed. There is a less commonly-known aspect of the Turing Test: it requires participants to distinguish the gender of the entity with which they are interacting. This feature has intrigued various theorists and produced distinctly polarized views. Slavoj Žižek, for example, contends that the Turing Test proves sexual difference as "not simply a biological fact, but the Real [sic] of an antagonism that defines humanity," a dimension without which humans could not be discerned from machines. By contrast, N. Katherine Hayles asserts that the Turing Test, far from confirming sexual difference as the end-all and be-all of humanness, exposes the very artificiality of such a distinction:

What the Turing test “proves” is that the overlay between the enacted and the represented bodies is no longer a natural inevitability but a contingent production, mediated by a technology that has become so entwined with the production of identity that it can no longer meaningfully be separated from the human subject.

(xiii)

Much like in the Turing test, the intersection of humanness, artificiality, and gender rests at the heart of a large corpus of twentieth-century science fiction from Mexico, Chile, and Argentina. The texts examined in Chapter 2 present a direct—and overt—proportionality between the intensity of gender performances, sexuality, and humanness in cybernetic characters, and they resonate with Žižek’s notion of sexual difference as the single cornerstone of humanness. Significantly, the posthuman entities in those narratives follow the same prototype: female, young, attractive, Europeanized, and—in most cases—highly sexualized. If that is the case for fembots, it is worth asking: if humanness is measured in the same terms, and gender and sexualities are represented in the same fashion for non-female cybernetic characters, then (how) do posthuman masculinities differ from femininities? Do non-female robots embody and experience sexuality as objects or subjects? Moreover, do authors’ own genders influence these representations? How are race and nationality presented and connected to gender in these works? In the end, does the gendering and sexing of robots in Latin American science fiction align more with Žižek’s views, or Hayles’? The present chapter will examine texts featuring male and ambiguously-gendered robots in search of answers for these questions.

Of Servants, Doubles, and Family Troubles: “Bil Tu”

“Bil Tu” first appeared in 1984, in the collection *La casa junto al mar y otros cuentos*, by Chilean author Ilda Cádiz Ávila. This short story also deals with the theme of robotic spouse doppelgangers that was analyzed previously in texts like Alicia Suárez’ “Samantha.” Cádiz Ávila develops her narrative in a much less somber manner, however, by injecting humor and playfulness into potentially disturbing topics, such as State-controlled reproduction and replacement of humans with perfect(ed) cybernetic doubles. As in “Samantha,” in “Bil Tu” the robot clone is meant to work as a servant in the protagonist’s household. But there is a twist: in Cádiz Ávila’s story the robotic maid is a copy of the husband, not the wife. This opens up fascinating avenues for the analysis of the effect of technology in the gendered division of (household) labor, female desire in the posthuman age, and the threats that posthuman technologies pose to heteronormative expressions of (masculine) gender.

An³⁹, the protagonist, is overwhelmed by her dual role as mother of four rambunctious children and data-entry clerk. The latter is made even more demanding by the State’s rules. In a future where couples may have only one child, An and her husband, Bil, have been assigned unusually intense workloads in order to make up for the excess children they have procreated. This has taken a toll on their romantic relationship: they no longer have sex, or spend time together, or talk to one another, as there is simply no time. Tired of an unfulfilling career, the coldness in her marriage, and her inability to

³⁹ Cádiz Ávila plays with Spanish phoneticizing of English names and words, such as An (for “Anne”), Bil uan/tu/zri (for “Bill one/two/three”), Miki (for “Mickey”), and “Joum Suplaico” (for “Home Supply Co.”). Mercedes Guijarro-Crouch suggests that this is done in order to highlight the theme of doubling in the text (44). I found some double-entendres in this wordplay as well, such as Bil as the Spanish Vil and An as in the Latin prefix an-, implying the character’s experience of deep lack and emptiness.

look after—or even be fond of—her children, An decides to commission a robot servant to help her with household chores, look after the kids, and be her companion. The android, made in the image of a much younger Bil, is aptly named “Bil Tu” and proves excellent at every task, making life easier for An. Bil, however, is not so taken with the seemingly perfect robot servant, who seems to be surely (and not too slowly) taking his place in both home and marriage. After a crescendo of passive-aggressive remarks against his cybernetic double, Bil finally snaps and destroys the robot in front of his wife and children, shocking the whole family. In the end, Bil realizes his wife misses the way he used to be but decides he can no longer be that man. Instead of trying to rekindle his romance, he opts to order another robot doppelgänger, named Bil Zri, to pick up things were Bil Tu left off—including the budding romance with his wife.

The title character is, in many ways, similar to the female robots analyzed in our Chapter 2. Bil Tu is a young, handsome, dapper male robot that makes the protagonist swoon with little effort. His smooth, youthful looks awaken dormant passions in An that her husband’s “rosto ajado y mirada opaca” (226) can no longer stir. He is also described in a kinder, more sensual way than the human Bil, emphasizing his “velvety” brown eyes and a low-pitched voice that stop the thoughts in An’s mind (228). Youth and good looks are valued higher than other traits in the object of desire, just as it was with “Minerva” and *Que Dios se apiade*. Bil Tu is also, literally, a servant. He is made exclusively to obey and please his female owner, thus suggesting that the fantasy of the robot sex-slave may not be so gender-specific after all. But unlike Araya’s and Guzmán Wolffer’s female robot characters, this cybernetic beau is not overtly sexualized. In fact, the text barely describes Bil Tu’s body, there are no sexual encounters of any kind between him and An,

and the majority of traits upon which the protagonist fixates are more often emotional or intellectual than physical.

Indeed, exaggerating gender in cyberbodies seems to be the norm in a great deal of Western posthuman science fiction, and not just for fembots. Many iconic “male” cybernetic characters, such as the Terminator, Robocop, and even Transformers, tend to follow similar extreme physical patterns: large, angular, hard bodies that can easily overpower adversaries. Springer suggests a connection between this kind of posthuman embodiment and the classic superhero “beefcake” prototype, thus resulting in an intimidating conflation of muscle and metal that is meant to convey the fearful side of technology and, very likely, to cancel out homoerotic gazing through massively violent looks and actions (39-41, 47). “Bil Tu” breaks away from this tradition by presenting a robot character that neither conforms to these overmasculinized physical parameters nor behaves according to hegemonic masculine standards. Instead, Cádiz Ávila characterizes her android as non-threatening, helpful, desirable, and gentle. Bil Tu’s body is meant to exercise kindness instead of violence, as reflected in the (somewhat sparse) descriptions of his features: a soft, velvety gaze, a low-pitched but tender voice that feels like a caress, etc (Cádiz Ávila 228). As in “Samantha,” the robot here is described more sensually than visually. However, in a departure from the white-washed, Europeanized fembots analyzed in Chapter 2, Bil Tu is expressly defined as a facsimile of Bil, a likely mestizo character: “hombre erguido, de cabello negro y lustroso” (226), “alto, de frente amplia, vivaz” (227), “ojos café oscuro” (228), etc.

Additionally, Cádiz Ávila’s robot defies the Schwarzenegger standard for androids in yet another way: by taking on the traditionally feminine roles of domestic

worker and primary caregiver for Bil and An's children. After acquiring the robot, all household chores and child-rearing tasks fall upon Bil Tu, thus leaving An free to pursue hobbies at her leisure. Bil Tu accepts these responsibilities without complaint and remains passive and obedient, even at the face of Bil Uan's insults (229). This role reversal, while effective for comedic purposes, also raises serious questions about the gendered division of household labor. Starting in the 1980s shared domestic and parental responsibilities have been commonly recorded in real-life households with two working parents (Deutsch 402, Shelton and John 408-409). Although homes with two employed parents have been common in Chile since that period as well, gender-based differences in wages and type of work continued through the 1990s in Chilean households (Pappas DeLuca 99-100). Additionally, domestic labor has been, historically, a very gendered line of work in Chile (and Latin America in general), both in its paid and unpaid forms—*empleada de servicio* and *ama de casa* respectively (Milanich 30, Pappas DeLuca 100). Echoing Chilean reality in Cádiz Ávila's time, the author's fictional, futuristic household portrays only one such figure in charge of all domestic labor. Both Bil and An hold full-time jobs, but An is the only one expected to keep the house organized and to look after the children. Once Bil Tu arrives, roles are switched and it is he, a masculine entity, who must take care of it all. But whether it's An or Bil Tu who's responsible, household labor is always segregated and gendered in the narrative, never shared. One can't help but wonder why. However, if Bil Tu is read as simply a non-human, non-gendered agent, a piece of technology to make life easier for both men and women, then it begs the question of whether there will come a time when neither gender is inevitably linked to household chores and parenting. Furthermore, will technology put a definite end to the

gendered division of all labor? Initial logic dictates “why not?” but Cádiz Ávila’s obscure little narrative suggests otherwise: even if technology can conquer amazing physical barriers, it won’t necessarily overcome unyielding mindsets. The concept of the future may not be synonymous with progress after all.

It is no surprise that Cádiz Ávila utilized the robot servant trope in her writing, as she was an avid reader of Asimov and Bradbury (Guijarro-Crouch 42). And despite some critics’ allegations that this literary device has become somewhat of a tired cliché in science fiction (Pierce 83), Bil Tu plays an integral part in this short story. The importance of the robot servant in Cádiz Ávila’s narrative, however, does not come from action but rather from interaction. His primary function in the text is to be An’s object of desire, and he is a very passive one at that. Although the narrative mentions Bil Tu’s regular interactions with the family and his work as a Latin and history tutor for An, he has only one overt—and clearly deferential—line of dialogue in the entire text: “Bil Tu, señora An” (228). Asimovian to a fault⁴⁰, Bil Tu is a rather boring character on its own: he simply follows commands but has no initiative; his own thoughts, feelings, and wishes are never mentioned; and he doesn’t show any resistance when attacked and ultimately destroyed by Bil Uan. One could even say that bombshell fembot characters like Leticia/Magnolia and Minerva had more spark in their circuits than Cádiz Ávila’s android. Indeed, Bil Tu is somewhat of an empty shell. But that very emptiness also

⁴⁰ The three laws of robotics drafted by Asimov are stated as follows: “One: A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. Two: A robot must obey orders given it by human beings except when such orders would conflict with the First Law. Three: A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law” (Asimov, cited in Pierce 77). According to Pierce, these laws have been criticized on various grounds, including their resemblance to slave morality and the restricting hold they place over robotic characters, where excessive servility makes them more of a hindrance than an aid (Pierce 80, 83).

makes him the perfect blank canvas for An and Bil (Uan) to project their pent up desires and fears respectively. It is only as a reflection of those troubling human feelings that Bil Tu truly comes alive.

From An's perspective, Bil Tu is a sort of *deus ex machina* that solves all of her problems as a mother, wife, and human being instantly. The children who never listened and gave her daily headaches are no longer an issue after Bil Tu's arrival—after that, the text barely even mentions them! Bil (Uan)'s coldness and lack of sexual interest suddenly stop worrying An once Bil Tu is there to keep her company. She is happy now, with no children, husband, or household issues to get in her way. An can disconnect herself from the world and be selfish, all thanks to Bil Tu's existence. In his analysis of film robots and computers that run the home, J.P. Telotte theorizes that these cybernetic creations are “pure figures of desire, although that desire is unburdened by responsibility or anxiety” (19). An's version of Bil Tu, then, is the embodiment of a desire for an adult life free of responsibilities and full of custom-made pleasure. Telotte notes, however, that most of the films within this category (such as *The Stepford Wives* and *Demon Seed*) ultimately caution against the danger of running away from reality—even more so than the danger of technology itself—by demonstrating that leaving everything up to a robot servant would, in the end, lead to disaster or at least failure (20). Cádiz Ávila's narrative is more ambivalent in this sense. Despite An's new-found happiness, her marriage to Bil (Uan) crumbles even further after the introduction of Bil Tu. Her husband is nearly driven mad as well, but other aspects of their life seem fine, if not better: The children are doing great, and everything in the house runs smoother than ever. And the failure/warning Telotte identifies in similar robot servant narratives is overwritten here by the

introduction of Bil Zri, an exact replacement for Bil Tu after Uan destroys him. There is no moral to the story, at least for An: she found the cheat code to life in her robot(s) and gets away with living on “easy mode” from then on.

But if Bil Tu truly is the ultimate, most customizable companion An could ask for, then why did she make him look like a younger version of her husband? As previously mentioned, moving forward in time does not necessarily equal progress. Similarly, the futuristic worlds and technologies of science fiction do not always convey expectations of times onward, but rather yearnings for what’s been left behind. As Baudrillard aptly notes, “the SF of this era of cybernetics and hyperreality” is not “a mirror held to the future, but rather a desperate rehallucinating of the past” (310). Bil Tu is certainly not the lover from An’s halcyon days for whom she presently longs. But he, in his compliant, programmable, predictable robot ways, is still a powerful reminder of the passion and youth she deemed long lost. Perhaps experiencing a younger Bil makes An feel like a younger An all over again. Could An’s infatuation with Bil Tu be a product of transference then?

The transference-love Freud identified as sudden (pseudo)romantic feelings from a patient for his/her therapist is, in a way, applicable here. After all, An’s regular study and chat sessions with Bil Tu can be interpreted a therapy of sorts for her, offering opportunities for self-reflection and disclosure that did not exist when she was too consumed with work and household responsibilities. Much like with transference-love in a clinical setting, An acts out her repressed desires rather than acknowledging them and developing coping strategies (Freud, “Observations on Transference-Love” 177). By the end of the narrative, An has not solved her marital problems nor strengthened her weak

bond with her children. She simply sweeps all issues under the rug and forgets about them under the false sense of security and harmony stemming from Bil Tu's presence. Additionally, it is the therapy—not a therapist in particular—that brings about transference-love, so patients are likely to experience this phenomenon from one therapist to the next (Freud 174). An, too, feels the same infatuation from one robot to the next. And the pathological implications of transference-love, said to be “lacking to a high degree in a regard for reality” and “less sensible, less concerned about consequences and more blind in its valuation of the loved person than [...] in the case of normal love” (Freud 179), become palpable in An's case. Nothing in her life—children, husband, work—matters as much as the robot.

Of course, transference can be interpreted from perspectives outside psychoanalysis as well. This concept has become especially valuable in fields such as cyber-psychology and posthumanism, where its influence on relationships between humans and cybernetic entities, from simple computers to androids, continues to be discussed. Suler abandons the notion of patient-therapist love and simply defines it as the tendency “to recreate in our current relationships the patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that were formed early in our life, most importantly in the relationships with our parents and siblings when we were children” (“Mom, Dad, Computer”). Transference appears to have a significant influence on how people interact with computers, as the latter's capacity for interaction and ability to elicit emotional responses on humans encourages users to assign strictly-human characteristics to machines—anthropomorphizing computers is simply inevitable (Suler). A computer's programmability also provides fertile ground for transference, as this malleable state

allows for the easy, subconscious projection of old, familiar mental patterns and feelings onto a new entity (Suler). In An's case, Bil Tu's physical resemblance to the younger Bil she misses makes it even easier for her to transfer her old feelings while, at the same time, assigning young Bil's personality traits to the robot. These may not truly be there—Bil Tu, as previously explained, is really quite plain and empty—but An automatically identifies them and believes he is the man she yearns for because of transference. Furthermore, transference in human-machine relationships may easily lead to the perception of computers (and, by extension, robots) as sex objects and the development of clearly romantic feelings for machines (Levy 192).

Such feelings of love and affection for computers, robots, and even automatons tend to have a comedic effect within fictional media because of their seeming absurdity. The title character in *Lars and The Real Girl*, our own An in Cádiz Ávila's short story, and even Nathaniel in Hoffman's "The Sandman" all seem utterly foolish and worthy of laughter. Nevertheless, people's perceptions of machines as human-like and their strong emotional attachments to them are far more complex than they appear. Hoffman had the right idea when writing about Nathaniel and the love he saw reflected in Olympia's eyes, as narcissism is theorized to be a key ingredient for human-machine affection and even eroticism. Because many of the actions performed by computers—and in the case of "Bil Tu," the robot—are dictated by the user him/herself, these are merely a reflection of the user's thoughts and likes. This way, humans who become deeply involved with intelligent machines "can easily fall in love with the worlds they have constructed or with their performances in the worlds created for them by others" (Turkle 2004: 82). The level of customization of an intelligent machine, which allows for the user to choose only traits

he/she likes, reinforces this idea of a human-machine love born out of egocentrism (Levy 107). It is no wonder that An prefers Bil Tu to Bil Uan, as the former was designed exactly to her liking, a faithful recreation of her parameters without true individuality.

Although transference and narcissism may be responsible for human-computer affection and attachment, perceived empathy and non-judgment are also key components of these unusual attractions toward intelligent machines. Perhaps the greatest example of this is the Eliza effect⁴¹, defined as “the susceptibility of people to read far more understanding than is warranted into strings of symbols—especially words—strung together by computers” (Hofstadter 157). The human tendency to anthropomorphize intelligent machines makes it easy to misconstrue an automated response for a true display of concern or even affection, which may very well be the case with An and Bil Tu. Additionally, humans generally feel less judged when expressing their personal issues to machines (Levy 113, Turkle 2004: 293), which creates a more comfortable and safe environment for self-expression and self-disclosure.

In Chapter 2, I compared the notion of the robot’s level of humanity based on its emotional and intellectual development—typical of English-language posthuman science fiction—versus its humanness based on sexual differentiation and gendering—more

⁴¹ This name derives from the ELIZA program of the 1970s, which was used in clinical trials where patients disclosed information with the software as they normally would with a therapist. The program operated by rephrasing the same basic information patients provided and adding simple phrases such as “please go on” to encourage them to continue typing in their thoughts. Despite the software’s complete inability to process the patients’ input—or even store said input at all—at least 50% of patients reported being convinced that ELIZA understood what they said and sympathized with their plights. (Hofstadter 157-58, Levy 113). The Eliza effect continues to occur with newer software applications and more advanced computing devices, and is likely to play an important part in the future development and implementation of robotics in clinical, industrial, and daily applications (Turtle 293).

common in Latin American science fiction. After studying Cádiz Ávila's work, a third criterion for robot humanness has become apparent. As explained by Levy:

The perception of life in a humanoid robot is likely to depend partly on the emotional attitude of the user. If users believe that their robot loves them, and that they in turn love their robot, the robot is more likely to be seen as alive. And if the robot is deemed to be alive, it is more likely that its owner will develop increased feelings of love for the robot, thereby creating an emotional snowball. (121)

The feeling that a robot is “alive,” then, could be less a matter of how well-developed the cybernetic entity is and more a product of human perception as influenced by transference, narcissism, and empathy. The merit of Cádiz Ávila's short story is that it brings this unique perspective on posthumanism to the fore, whereas a great deal of robot science fiction does not take it into account. With the exception of Aldunate's “Juana y la cibernética” (which I will analyze later in this chapter), “Bil Tu” is the only narrative in this study that openly posits this question and centers the reader back on the “human” part of posthumanism. Over two decades after Cádiz Ávila's text was published, this question is only recently becoming more central in current analyses on interactive technology, leading researches to wonder “not about whether relational artifacts really have intelligence or emotions but about what they evoke in their users” (Turkle 2004: 294).

Just as An's own feelings and repressed emotions created a special version of Bil Tu in her eyes, so did Bil (Uan)'s. But human Bil's vision of the robot is presented in the text as a much more somber one, in which Bil Tu is not a kind helper but a threat that must be swiftly eliminated. The fear and anger the android servant evokes in Bil Uan is,

most likely, a product of doubling, a process which, within fiction, often implies a threat to humans regardless of the robot's good or evil nature:

Even when presented as our servant and when [...] we know it poses no threat, the robot can still be a troubling presence, precisely because it is a double or simulacrum, a kind of mirror of the human that magnifies our problems by showing them in stark or alien terms, and suggests how easily we might be replaced by something else—perhaps eventually to be discarded as meaningless or irrelevant to the world's workings. (Telotte 119-120)

The doubling in "Bil Tu" is quite overt: Both human and robot share the same name (Bil), the same looks, and nearly the same place in the family and marriage. And this particular doubling carries a strong element of displacement, evident in Bil's denomination changing from simply Bil to Bil Uan and An's sudden loss of interest in and need for him after the android's arrival: "Para An es un abismo de conocimientos y busca tenerlo a su lado, dejando de añorar la compañía del esposo, cada vez más alejado y distinguido ahora como Bil Uan" (Cádiz Ávila 228). Copies, clones, and other (technological) doubles have that inherent sense of danger, not only because of their potential to substitute their original but also because they put the very notion of origin in doubt (Telotte 110). Under this logic, Baudrillard himself alludes to "the murderous power of images," and warns about the way copies—be it in the form of film, holograms, or even cybernetic machines—kill their own models by simulating them: if signs can be a substitute for the "real," then the latter becomes a simulacrum as well. While this is not to say it becomes unreal, it is also "never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference" (5), similarly to how human

Bil goes from being a unique individual to becoming one of a series of systematically numbered, exchangeable, disposable Bils in Cádiz Ávila's short story⁴².

The unsettling effect of doubling can also be explained from a psychoanalytic perspective, within the context of the uncanny. During initial stages of development, doubles can have a comforting effect through their connection to primary narcissism. However, once these stages are past, the double is typically more a reminder of the self's mortality, a "ghastly harbinger of death" that evokes terror (Freud, *The Uncanny* 9). A combination of unintentional repetition and helplessness regarding said repetition may also be perceived as uncanny (Freud 12). For Bil (Uan), it must certainly be *unheimlich* to suddenly find his own robotic clone in the house without ever requesting the android's presence (or even existence). In some cases, there may be a connection between castration anxiety and the uncanny as well (Freud 7-8). Perhaps Bil Uan's experience of the *unheimlich* is further solidified by the perceived threat to his manhood from seeing his younger, more physically-fit doppelganger stealing the affections of his wife, plus the resulting fear of being de/downgraded. Or perhaps Bil Uan's apprehension toward Bil Tu is much less complicated and closer to the fear and hatred some people experience at the wild possibility of being surpassed and eventually replaced in the intimate setting by items such as vibrators and sex dolls (Levy 306).

Regardless of their cause, Bil Uan's (re)actions toward Bil Tu express an obvious masculinity crisis. The husband's verbal interactions with the robot, for example, are

⁴² Other instances of doubling in "Bil Tu" include An and Bil's biological children—two sets of twins—and their names (Miki Uan, Miki Tu, Bibi Uan, and Bibi Tu). The only character not subject to doubling is An, which could be read as a way to highlight her centrality in the narrative while, at the same time, suggesting the lack of uniqueness and importance the children and husband have in relation to her comically selfish character.

clear attempts to establish authority: “para él es ‘el robot’ y si algo le ordena es en tono duro, de superioridad” (Cádiz Ávila 229). Authority, more than violence itself, is a prime feature of masculine hegemony (Connell 77). And yet, “violence often underpins or supports authority” (Connell 77). Bil Uan, who was originally just reserved and distant, adopts a violent, irate personality upon confronting his cybernetic double and rival. He issues open threats against the robot’s existence, uses harsh words and raises his voice when speaking to his wife about Bil Tu, and accuses An of being mentally unstable for not thinking of the android as an old piece of cybernetic trash as he does⁴³ (Cádiz Ávila 229). There is also the sudden, violent destruction of Bil Tu, for which Bil Uan is solely responsible. This scene is especially disturbing: Bil Uan proclaims “¡Voy a matarlo!” as soon as An admits to being in love with the robot. He then races into the house, grabs his gun, and points it straight at Bil Tu’s chest despite the presence of his children, who are standing at both sides of the android and pleading for their father not to kill their cybernetic friend. Even with his kids at such close distance, Bil Uan fires a shot, turning his rival into merely “algunos montoncitos de metal y plástico fundidos” (230-231). In this sense, Bil Uan is represented as closer in temperament to the violent, hypermasculine androids and cyborgs analyzed by Springer than Bil Tu himself. Popular representations of masculinized androids and cyborgs are loaded with violent traits and bodies and often resort to killing as a way to release masculine frustrations and dispel any signs of weakness, passivity, and even homosexuality (Springer 48-49). Killing Bil Tu is definitely a release—and relief—for Bil Uan, who savors his pride and a renewed sense

⁴³ Some of Bil Uan’s remarks indicating this: “Estoy harto de oír ensalzar sus maravillas.—Y agrega, con mayor énfasis—: Y si llega a exasperarme de veras, ¡Lo hago añicos!” “¿Inteligente? ¡Vaya, mujer! Estás perdiendo el sentido de la realidad. Ese robot no es sino un montón de materiales de laboratorio, quizás con desechos de ejemplares devueltos por fallados o viejos.” (229)

of superiority after the deed is done: “pasea la vista a su alrededor, desafiante, soberbio” (Cádiz Ávila 231).

The robot in “Bil Tu,” then, is a mirror for the husband’s masculine crises as much as he is a mirror for the wife’s sexual frustration. But despite Bil (Uan)’s attempt to reassert his manhood and place as head of the family by assuming a violent, unyielding persona, he is still represented as a more maternal and nurturing character than An. Very soon after Bil (Uan) destroys the robot, the narrative shifts focus into the husband’s mixed feelings about his marriage, his family, and the shocking events from that afternoon: “Tras la primera sensación de triunfo se sabe derrotado. Lo abruma un remolino de emociones. ¿Por qué su descontrol?” (Cádiz Ávila 231). Now emotionally vulnerable and unashamedly honest, Bil admits to feeling as unhappy and enslaved in parenting three unplanned children as his wife, An. Nevertheless, he also makes it clear that “jamás se ha arrepentido de su elección cuando le pusieron frente al dilema: o más trabajo o la desintegración de sus hijos” (231). Bil also admits to being jealous, bitter, and resentful, though not about the robot. He is jealous of the man he used to (yet no longer can) be, whom his wife continues to idealize. Finally, Bil chooses to sacrifice being the sole object of affection of his wife in order to make her wish come true, and he is the one to commission Bil Zri as a replacement for Bil Tu—and, by extension, himself. Conversely, An, despite her obvious frustrations, is never portrayed this emotionally open nor committed in the text. In the end, she is the more oblivious, selfish character, while Bil ends up seeming more emotional, selfless, and motherly. In spite of the narrative’s apparent conformity with gendered family roles at the beginning, traditional masculine/impassive vs. female/emotional binaries are inverted by the end of “Bil Tu.”

And the robot, which allows for both deep self-reflection (in Bil's case) and escapism (in An's case), is the catalyst for this reversal.

Section Conclusion:

"Bil Tu" features a male robot character that, in many ways, is not too different from the somewhat shallow fembots in previously analyzed narratives. Good looks and youth remain highly valued traits in humanoid machines, especially when the android is meant to serve as a companion and object of affection and lust of a human protagonist. "Bil Tu," also makes it evident that female characters in Latin American posthuman science fiction are not exempt from the desire to replace their spouses with younger, prettier substitutes—the cult of youth and beauty may be less gender-specific than it originally seemed after all. The robot character in this story seems to have less agency and autonomy than those in previously analyzed works, and his point of view is never truly featured in the narrative. Bil Tu is, in a nutshell, more of an object than a subject in Cádiz Ávila's text. But despite his lack of initiative, the robot's presence proves pivotal in the story, as it leads to many important twists: a switch in the gendered division of household labor, the dethroning of Bil (Uan) as husband and father figure, and Bil (Uan)'s realization that he has been a lousy husband and father for too long⁴⁴, among others. It is worth noting that, despite Bil Tu's aid in bringing repressed sexual and marital issues to light, neither An nor Bil (Uan) truly attempt to work out permanent solutions to the problems in their marriage. An escapes from them by commissioning Bil Tu, and Bil (Uan) gives up on them by commissioning Bil Zri. This may very well be a

⁴⁴ The same cannot be said for An, who never realizes she has also been a lousy wife and mother for too long.

veiled criticism of capitalist consumer culture, where it is easier to purchase a product or service (in this case, a robot to replace a mediocre husband/please an unreasonably-demanding wife) than to make a personal effort.

According to Sarah Lefanu, having a female protagonist does not necessarily make a literary text feminist (24). Is Cádiz Ávila's short story feminist after all? The answer cannot be a simple "yes" or "no," as the text is complex and somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, female desire is taken more into account in Cádiz Ávila's text than it was in works by Guzmán Wolffer and Araya. However, lust and sexuality are treated in a far more demure way. "Bil Tu" eschews depictions of nudity and sexual encounters, perhaps as a way to echo the female protagonist's sexual frustrations. To an extent, this is a refreshing departure from the gratuitous, raunchy sex content of science fiction works by male authors featuring robot-human relationships. And yet, not exploring female sexual experiences and perceptions in a deeper, more open way is a missed opportunity here, as this is one of the very few female-authored Latin American posthuman science fiction works focusing on a robot custom-built to fulfill a woman's desires⁴⁵. On the other hand, female agency is highlighted but complicated in "Bil Tu." When An grows tired of her exhausting situation, she calls the Joun Supplaico, all on her own, to order a robot servant made to her liking. Initially, this gives the illusion that she is actively seeking a solutions to her sexual (and other) frustrations. But in the end, the tension between An and her husband is never resolved, and she and the robot never consummate their relationship either. Did An truly find a solution or merely a palliative?

⁴⁵ Or at least one of the very few that can be found after digging deeper and deeper into the cavernous depths of WorldCat.

In addition, given that “Bil Tu” was published in the 1980s, it would not have been far-fetched to have the female protagonist be a scientist and construct the robot by herself. This may have been another missed opportunity to empower and deepen An as a character. Even so, Cádiz Ávila’s choice to make her a professionally unmotivated office clerk is not entirely without merit, as it adds to the tiresome, overwhelming atmosphere surrounding—and crucial to—An’s character. In any case, “Bil Tu” does interrogate some important aspects of gender analysis, such as the need—or lack thereof—of a gendered division of household labor and parenting, the possibility that said division may be erased by technology, and the effects that technological devices and organisms have on masculinities as they—intentionally or not—begin to satisfy women’s sexual and emotional needs.

“Bil Tu” may be a brief, rather obscure short story, yet it condenses a surprising amount of complex issues, such as the blurring of boundaries between home technologies and family membership, the social and emotional implications of human-robot relationships, the effect of technology on gender expressions and gender-based divisions, and the potential displacement—and eventual replacement—of humans by intelligent machines, among others. There are additional aspects of Cádiz Ávila’s text which, due to thematic distance to the current focus of this chapter, have not been discussed here. These include: State-controlled reproduction, perpetuation of traditional marriage and family structure despite futuristic methods for raising children, and the absence of divorce and/or single parenthood as viable options within the context of the narrative. I hope to delve into these issues further, both in “Bil Tu” and Cádiz Ávila’s other science fiction works, in future research.

Lastly, let us remember the message inherent in Cádiz Ávila's narrative to assure us that, as powerful as cybernetic creations may become, a great deal of that power comes from the human mind. The machine is just a machine. But the machine is also what we make it. A caring robot is not really caring nor evil, but we believe it so for it is as we project it. The robot is a canvas, and human is the painter.

Vicarious Heroism via Posthumanism: *Flores para un cyborg*

Unlike most of the authors studied in earlier chapters of this dissertation, Diego Muñoz Valenzuela is well known in Latin American—and particularly Chilean—science fiction circles. Despite an initial career as a civil engineer, Muñoz Valenzuela has published literary works that range from short narrative collections to ongoing novel series since 1990. His best-known novel, *Flores para un cyborg* (1994) won the Premio del Consejo Nacional del Libro de Chile (Novela Inédita) in 1996 and has been re-published in Spain (2008) and Italy (2013) (Areco 45). The author was also named one of the "25 tesoros literarios a la espera de ser descubiertos" at the 2011 edition of the Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara.

Flores para un Cyborg is not the only posthumanist narrative by Muñoz Valenzuela. "Luces de neon," a 1994 story published as part of the award-winning collection *Lugares secretos*⁴⁶, features a robot protagonist that roams around the city in search of lost memories and identity. *Flores para un cyborg*, however, is a better fit for this chapter due to its thematic: male-centric reproduction through technology, (a very literal) gender construction in cybernetic organisms, and the persistence of

⁴⁶ *Lugares secretos* won the Premio Consejo Nacional del Libro de Chile al Mejor Libro de Cuentos in 1994.

heteronormativity in a highly technologized world. Muñoz Valenzuela published *Las criaturas del cyborg*, a sequel to *Flores*, in 2009 and has recently announced on his blog that he plans to turn his cyborg universe into a trilogy.

According to Haraway, “Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves” (181). This position, albeit reassuring, has been criticized because it does not account for the ways in which posthuman representations—especially those in science fiction literature and film—actually reinscribe the gender and sexuality dichotomies Haraway hoped to do away with. Anne Balsamo, for example, asserts that Haraway’s project has not been yet realized because “the dominant representation of cyborgs reinserts us into dominant ideology by reaffirming bourgeois notions of human, machine and femininity” (154).

Flores para un cyborg is a perfect example of the stereotypically-gendered representation of cyborgs that Balsamo identifies in contemporary science fiction. Tom, the cybernetic protagonist, identifies himself as clearly male and answers to monolithic codes of masculinity: he aims to appear tough and rugged, he’s staunchly heterosexual, and his greatest ambition is to possess a penis of his own so that he can finally have sexual intercourse with human females. In my reading of Muñoz Valenzuela’s novel, I hope to discover the deeper implications of this seemingly stereotypical, nearly cartoonish, representation of posthuman masculinity: the process of (artificially) constructing a man from scratch, how national and international codes of manhood inform Tom’s gendering process, how the “Latin lover” stereotype is turned from Othering to empowering in the novel, the level of sexualization and objectification of a male robot character in a male-written narrative vis-à-vis those of female robots in

similar science fiction works, as well as the marks of Chilean masculinities and post-dictatorial ideologies in Tom's experience of gender.

Flores para un cyborg follows the life of Rubén Arancibia, an exiled robotics engineer who builds a cybernetic clone of himself⁴⁷ while finishing his doctoral studies in the fictitious Dirtystone University, in the United States. After completing his masterpiece, which he names TOMM ("Talkative Organized Movable Model," although he is most commonly referred to as simply "Tom" throughout the novel), Rubén tests the effectiveness of his artificial double by sending him to attend meetings in his place and even defend his doctoral dissertation, tasks that Tom completes without arousing the slightest suspicion. This gives Rubén the idea to use Tom as his trump card in an elaborate plan to exact revenge upon several key players in the dictatorial regime under which he was first disappeared and tortured, then forced to abandon his country after being rescued. Upon returning to his native land (never overtly called "Chile" but easily guessed as such from the use of slang, gastronomical and cultural references), Rubén enlists the help of several old friends and comrades, his sister, and a former lover. Tom is at the center of all reconnaissance and infiltration missions, posing as some of Rubén's targets (aided by surgically swappable faces) in order to confuse the enemy, and becoming more independent and effective as the narrative progresses.

Eventually, Tom is destroyed while protecting Rubén from being mortally shot during their biggest operation. However, Rubén is able to reconstruct him at great

⁴⁷ This doppelgänger, despite the novel's title, is not a human-machine hybrid but rather a robot in its proper sense, built solely from artificial materials. The robot's skin is described as a self-sustaining substance made from organic components, but it does not come from a human body nor is it developed from human cells or genes (67). Therefore, Muñoz Valenzuela's use of the term "cyborg" deviates from the actual meaning of that word and constitutes a synonym for "robot" instead.

expense and effort, and Tom is brought back to “life”—though not without a good dash of obligatory sappiness. It is also worth mentioning that Tom’s number-one request throughout the novel is to have an artificial penis added to his cybernetic body. In the end, Rubén finally concedes and constructs a cyber-phallus for Tom, with which the robot graduates from machine to “hombre completo” and is welcome into “[el] mundo de los machos recios” (190). The story ends with a Hollywoodesque happy ending: Rubén marries and impregnates Beatriz, his femme fatale; Rubén’s sister is saved from eternal spinsterhood thanks to their Brazilian friend and scientific genius, Gerardo dos Santos; and Tom is finally able to consummate his relationship with Paulina, a laboratory assistant working under Rubén’s supervision who hasn’t the slightest clue that Tom is a machine.

Flores para un cyborg stands apart from similar Latin American science fiction works because it provides insight into the intersection of masculinities and posthumanism—more so than narratives such as “Bil Tu,” for example. At first glance, Tom’s experience and embodiment of masculinity seem very rigid and stereotypical. Described as “un tanto inexpresivo y rígido, tipo Schwarzenegger” (Muñoz Valenzuela 26), the robot comes across as a hard-bodied badass who can blow war criminals’ heads off without even flinching (72-73, 110, 115, 116), sweet talk black market dealers into forging passports for him (35-36), design his own cybernetic legs and penile implants (23, 76), and still have time to make throngs of women swoon at his every word and gesture (46). Tom’s “macho” manhood is asserted, then, through a combination of aggressiveness, technological prowess, strategic homosociality and, above all, virility. Already built to be physically and intellectually superior to organic humans, the android

remains unsatisfied with himself until a working artificial penis is finally added to his cyberbody for the sole purpose of becoming sexually active. Even his name, Tom, is reminiscent of the term “tomcat,” commonly used to denote “a sexually aggressive man; a womanizer,” and “a male who pursues women promiscuously for sexual gratification” (Oxford Dictionary Online). It is worth noting that Tom’s sexual thirst is a direct reflection of his creator’s, whom the novel portrays as a legendary womanizer. In an effort perhaps to counterbalance Ruben’s aptitude and tireless dedication for scientific pursuits—traits not-so-commonly associated with manliness—, his character is often presented as an insatiable sex beast, as evident in the following passages:

Debido a lo esporádico de nuestros descansos y a la intensidad del trabajo aislado logramos alcanzar cierta fama entre las chicas. Unas verdaderas bestias en celo éramos al salir de los laboratorios después de semanas de encierro: barbudas, desgredadas, hasta sucias, pero feroces e inagotables en el lecho amoroso. (Muñoz Valenzuela 18)

Después deben haberles contado a sus amigas que habían quedado con dolores musculares y óseos por más de una semana. Ahí logramos nuestro rating más alto, fue un verdadero salto hacia la gloria. ¿Quién ha dicho que las satisfacciones de la investigación científica son sólo éticas e intelectuales? Algún impotente, seguro. (19)

Once Tom is equipped with a functional sexual organ, he, too, sets foot in the realm of frenzied sexual activity. Paulina Veloso, His chosen partner, is described as “una rubia espectacular” (207). The novel emphasizes this trait more frequently and strongly than this character’s promising work with robotics in Ruben’s laboratory. Tom explains

his sexual dynamics with Paulina as “algo incontenible, donde podemos, en cuanto existe la oportunidad nos escapamos” (208). But even before his sex operation, Tom was capable of experiencing intense sexual arousal. Early on, the android’s systems go into overdrive after first meeting Rubén’s old lover—and eventually wife—Beatriz Manosalva. Tom’s cybernetic life signs (which include a pulse and breathing rate) skyrocket as the robot exclaims “¡Qué mujer, Rubén, qué mujer! [...] ¡Es preciosa, inquietante, deliciosa, violenta, sensual, fragante, suave, fuerte!” (69). In general, most of the heterosexual male characters in *Flores para un cyborg* tend to assert their manhood by openly expressing their lust for female characters and assuming voyeuristic roles regarding stereotypically attractive women, especially when said male characters appear together in scenes or dialogues. This points to the prevalence and importance of homosociality in the novel⁴⁸.

According to Bird, heterosexual manhood is often emphasized within homosocial groups by referencing notions commonly attached to hegemonic masculinities (120). Even if not all participants in the group are aligned with such notions, their acknowledgement within the circle still helps credit their manhood. One of these notions is the sexual objectification of women, which “facilitates self-conceptualization as positively male by distancing the self from all that is associated with being female” (Bird 123). Perhaps Tom is, in his own way, trying to fit into the men’s club along with Rubén,

⁴⁸ Male bonding is, without a doubt, one of the most common activities in *Flores para un cyborg*. Be it extensive boys-only sessions at the robotics laboratory (17), joint (hetero)sexual escapades (18-19, 77), group drinking (52-58, 63, 77), assassination missions (107-119, 198-205), beach trips (104-105), or just long-winded conversations (especially those between Rubén and Tom, which permeate the entire text), nonsexual interactions between men make the bulk of the novel.

Gerardo, Ricardo, and even Huapi and Omar⁴⁹. After all, “being a man” is one way of being human—precisely what the android, implicitly, hopes to become.

The relationship between hypersexuality and masculinity present in Muñoz Valenzuela’s novel can also be traced back to the Latin Lover stereotype, a fixture typical of Hollywood films that the author employs consciously yet unexpectedly. Traditionally, the “Latin Lover” is portrayed as a combination of “eroticism, exoticism, tenderness tinged with violence and danger all adding up to the romantic promise that, sexually, things could very well get out of control” (Ramírez Berg 76). It seems odd, then, that Muñoz Valenzuela would willingly exoticize his protagonists, especially by following a foreign construction based largely upon (cartoonish) stereotypes. At some point, Rubén even acknowledges himself as an exotic element within the Anglo social sphere and seems happy in his position as an Other: “Siempre había unas chicas norteamericanas de pregrado en buena disposición para engancharse con *Latin lovers* que las hicieran olvidar de la ingenuidad de sus compatriotas” (Muñoz Valenzuela 18). The protagonist enjoys being the “Latin Lover” to the point that he believes the title to give him an advantage over WASP males. Critics like Ramírez Berg view the “Latin Lover” as a reductive media paradigm that emphasizes savagery in Latinos (77). But Muñoz Valenzuela subverts this position by making it seem desirable and turning it into a source of pride and superiority—power—for male characters like Rubén, Gerardo and, by extension,

⁴⁹ These characters have all, in different ways, strengthened their homosocial bonds through the objectification of women. Gerardo and Rubén worked as a team when looking for sexual partners in Dirtystone. When drinking together, Ricardo and Rubén reminisce of their common (and graphic) lust for one of their professor’s wife. While working at sea, Huapi and Rubén looked for prostitutes together. And, in years previous to the events in the novel, Omar and Rubén would have deep conversations at the beach and then run towards the female tourists, whom they closely surveilled with their “vista de rayos X, tratando de eliminar los breves trazos de sus bikinis y de penetrar en los ángulos más recónditos de sus cuerpos tersos” (104-105).

Tom the android. By also presenting Anglo male characters as deformed caricatures⁵⁰, Muñoz Valenzuela emphasizes the virtues of the “Latin Lover” and rebrands the stereotype into a positive, powerful icon in his novel.

The “Latin Lover,” however, is not the only Hollywood male stereotype present in *Flores para un cyborg*. The Classic Hollywood Hero is also influential in its construction of characters, especially Tom’s. The android’s forming intellect is nourished through countless databases and media resources around the world, accessed through the Internet (Muñoz Valenzuela 23). Yet despite his ability to tune in to any television channel in the world, Tom shows a distinct preference for old Hollywood idols, including Humphrey Bogart, Robert Mitchum, John Wayne, and Clark Gable, whom he faithfully emulates as he tries to develop a range of facial expressions and body gestures (27). It is ironic, perhaps, that after blatantly mocking North American male types and exalting Latin lovers for their supposed sexual superiority, the narrative shifts to a glorification of the Classic Hollywood Hero, a White Anglo-Saxon symbol par excellence. It bears mentioning that racial constructions in *Flores para un cyborg* are problematic, to say the least. The descriptions of non-white characters are fraught with offensively racialized language⁵¹, leaning generally toward exoticization, animalization, and the portrayal of

⁵⁰ Dr. Johnson, one of Rubén’s dissertation committee members, is often referred to as “el reptil” and described as a lizard-like spastic idiot: “El doctor Johnson era un rematado imbécil que no daba pie con bola al momento de explicar un desarrollo matemático” (14), “había ido adquiriendo una variada gama de tics que lo sacudían de cabeza a pies, descontrolando de manera grotesca su intrincado y sensible sistema nervioso” (14), “sus hijos, dos pequeñas bestias ávidas y malignas como tiranosaurios [...] Evidentemente, Johnson debió ser cuando pequeño una traviesa lagartija como ellos” (15). Similarly, another committee member, Dr. Kovalski, is regarded as “la bestia odiosa” (31).

⁵¹ This includes expressions such as “modismos de piel roja cargante” (21), “un negrazo de dos metros [...] de dedos gruesos como bananas [...] [y] una herramienta digna de museo, larga y gorda, del tamaño de un salame” (78), “no tiene mujer ni piezas de caza en la ciudad... entonces dispara y se emborracha, dispara y se emborracha, disp...” (106, in reference to Painemal, a character of indigenous origin, who is also said to roar loudly after killing a man on page 112), and “contesta lo que te pregunto, hijo de puta, antes de que te mande a un lugar donde Mahoma pueda ensartarte” (114, directed to a character of Arabic-descent).

said characters as savages. In this sense, the idealization of old Hollywood protagonists within the novel, albeit disconcerting, makes sense given the text's racist undertones.

Despite the influence of Hollywood standards in the robot protagonist's development of an identity of its own, definite traits of Chilean masculinities are embodied by both Tom and Rubén, his human double and creator. In their ethnographic study, "Ser hombre en Santiago de Chile" (1998), Valdés and Olavarría found that Chilean expressions of masculinity have been uniquely influenced by national history, the country's years under Pinochet's military regime and subsequent transition toward democracy and post-dictatorial healing (12). They identify an overarching masculine style that, despite being somewhat introverted, inexpressive, and private (13), also values personal independence, autonomy, and avoids inferiority: a man "debe dar la sensación de estar seguro, de saber lo que hace" (14). This sense of autonomy and unrelenting self-confidence is definitely palpable in Rubén and Tom. The former has no problem dismissing his superiors (both at Dirtystone and later on in Chile, at CENIT) as charlatans whose intellect is less developed than his own and only care about making themselves rich at the expense of others (22, 33, 140-142). Rubén isn't impervious to bragging on himself either, as was evident in earlier passages about his sexual conquests or when he speaks of his own professional achievements, referring to himself at one point as "el clandestino sucesor de Turing, el doctor Frankenstein de fines del siglo XX" (124). Similarly, Tom is confident enough to take matters into his own cybernetic hands on more than one occasion. He goes off on his own to procure a forged passport and only tells Rubén after the fact (34). Near the end of the novel he chooses to undergo plastic

surgery to pass for a street thug⁵² and subsequently infiltrate the underground scene to spy on a drug dealer named Francisco Ortúzar and an ex-lawyer and hit man known as “El cadáver” Cáceres, leading to the capture of the former and death of the latter (170-176, 196). Additionally, Tom is often characterized as eager for independence from his creator. During countless banter sessions, he asks Rubén to treat him as an equal even though he is his robot. The android’s obsession with having a penis may also be interpreted as his ultimate attempt to become independent. Being in control of his sexuality would allow Tom to form deeper connections with people of his choosing and, eventually, form a household of his own, away from Rubén⁵³.

Yet another tenet of masculinity identified by Valdés and Olavarria becomes evident in *Flores para un cyborg*: “El varón debe ser fuerte, no tener miedo, no expresar sus emociones ni llorar, salvo en situaciones en que el hecho de hacerlo reafirma su hombría” (Valdés and Olavarria 15). After his sex assignment operation, Tom is overcome with many thoughts and—unusually for an android—emotions. However, he decides to deal with these feelings and questions alone, and keeps to himself. Rubén realizes his robot creation may be overwhelmed, but agrees that sorting out such feelings on his own is the standard for their gender: “Desapareció cruzando la puerta del quirófano y no dejé de experimentar cierta desazón. Quizás me necesitara a su lado. Pero ya era un *hombre*. Tendría que cuidarse solo” (192, author’s emphasis). In addition, Tom

⁵² Once again, the robot’s transformation is heavily influenced by Hollywood. His look is described as “un engendro a medio camino entre Bob Dylan, James Dean y Elvis Presley, más unas imprescindibles gotas de postmodernidad y una pizca de esencia punky” (170)

⁵³ Admittedly, this reading is problematic in that it assumes traditional heteronormative marriage as the robot’s goal. On the one hand, this assumption is somewhat unavoidable, as such an outcome is heavily and openly suggested in the novel, with Tom constantly voicing his desire for female sex partners and, later on, a committed relationship with Paulina. On the other hand, heteronormativity aside, this still counts as a plea for independence on the android’s part. And valuing independence does fit with the standards of masculinity identified by Valdés and Olavarria.

is capable of crying but refrains from doing so until the very end of the novel during an emotional, intimate scene shared with his creator: “En la mirada del androide se mantenía una sombra de tristeza, una incertidumbre que lo atormentaba. Juraría que sus ojos brillaban como si fuesen a salir de ellos lágrimas gruesas y varoniles” (208-209). The thick and manly tears Tom is said to cry confirm further the importance of maintaining an air of toughness, even in the face of existential crises. Similar language is used to describe other emotionally-charged homosocial moments in *Flores para un cyborg*, including Rubén’s reunion with Ricardo after years of exile and Tom’s (near) death in Rubén’s arms when an assassination mission goes awry⁵⁴. As Valdés and Olavarría observed, the masculinities found in Muñoz Valenzuela’s novel justify showing emotional vulnerability so long as it is presented as manly.

Other masculine standards recognized by Valdés and Olavarría include compulsive working, staunch heterosexuality, and adherence to high moral codes (15), all of which are easily exemplified in *Flores para un cyborg*. Rubén is perfectly happy to spend days, sometimes weeks at a time, confined in his laboratory doing work to build—and later rebuild—his robot, and Tom turns espionage into a full-time job and often goes away on missions for extended periods of time in order to help bring to fruition Rubén’s revenge plans. The protagonists’ addiction to work not only demonstrates their adherence to the aforementioned Chilean masculinity codes but also serves a symbiotic purpose, as

⁵⁴ Rubén and Ricardo are careful to conceal their feelings from one another in order to protect their manhood: “Llegó Ricardo y nos dimos un largo abrazo que llenó de lágrimas nuestros ojos que enjugamos en secreto, antes de mirarnos frente a frente” (55). When Rubén finds Tom’s charred body, he expresses his desperation by yelling expletives at it: “no me dejes solo ahora, cabrón, abre los ojos” (116). Additionally, his eyes are said to fill with “unas lágrimas gruesas e incontinentes a través de las cuales apenas podía ver” (116). Once again, crying is permissible for male characters as long as it is presented as a tough and rough—not delicate—activity.

the tireless work of one is meant to benefit the other, thus strengthening their homosocial bond.

The persistent heterosexuality described by Valdés and Olavarría is unique because it begins with a steep focus in conquering and penetrating (multiple) women yet almost inevitably evolves into a long-term plan to turn erotic conquests into monogamous relationships and then families where the husband and father is the definite leader and main provider (15, 20). Both Tom and Rubén experience a similar progression in their sexual lives and interactions. They begin with a clear preference for polygamy. Rubén is initially portrayed as averse to exclusive relationships (on page 30, he categorically denies to be dating a woman named Angela, who claims to be his girlfriend) yet engages in several one-night stands. Meanwhile, Tom, despite lacking the hardware for traditional (hetero)sexual activity, turns down Rubén's offer to have a robot girlfriend made for himself but asks instead to have parts added so he can "salir de juerga con chicas, con chicas humanas" (38)—not single, but plural *chicas*. As the novel progresses, however, each bachelor settles down with one stable partner and sets goals aimed at family-making: Rubén with Beatriz (whom he, in fact, marries and with whom he expects a child by the novel's end), and Tom with Paulina (who becomes his exclusive, long-term partner). Even characters like Gerardo, the other half of Rubén's Latin Lover duo at Dirtystone, end up committing to one woman with marriage as a goal—Jimena, Rubén's sister, in his case.

It is worth mentioning that the novel also highlights compulsory heterosexuality by discrediting homosexuality as undesirable, abnormal, and even downright evil. Rubén, initially excited at the thought of having a robotic clone to do tedious work in his stead,

becomes worried that people will notice them living together: “dos hombres viviendo juntos era un hecho que perjudicaría [su] fama de macho” (26). Similarly, every time Tom brings up his sex operation Rubén stops him from discussing it further because he finds it personally offensive: “ofende mi virilidad eso de estar fabricando... vergas, con todo lo que significa además, Bueno, no se hable más” (49), “eso ofendería mi virilidad, Tom, trata de comprenderlo” (76), “Otro tema: tu maldita verga biónica. Completamos tu diseño preliminar [...] no sabes los dolores de cabeza que me ha causado este asunto” (177). In addition, openly homosexual characters such as López and Lara (a gay couple involved in war crimes, who Rubén plans to eliminate and Tom despises) and the transsexual character Eustaquio Paredes/Cinthia Morrison are alluded to with crude expressions, such as “siniestro” (94), “aberrantes” (94), “esas cucarachas” (100), “bestias que de humano poco y nada tienen” (101), “sabandijas que no valen ni un piojo” (101), “marimacho” (106), “puede ser que tenga los alambres pelados” (106), “un peón sucio” (106) and “tétrica silueta” (119), among others. Halfway through the novel, all of these non hetero/cisgendered characters perish together in a massive explosion. Thus difference is punished quite literally. Such characters do not have any positively portrayed counterparts either, as all other characters—including gangsters, policemen, housekeepers, and even sex workers—appear to be heterosexual.

In their study, Valdés and Olavarría conclude that, within the observed patterns of masculinity in contemporary Santiago, “ser hombre es ser recto, responsable, le obliga a comportarse correctamente” (15). Tom the android is the ultimate embodiment of moral loftiness. Despite being physically and intellectually superior to organic humans, Tom never uses his abilities to abuse people, and the times he does kill humans his actions are

justified as part of a greater plan towards restitution for the cruelty civilians like Rubén, his friends and family experienced during the military regime. Despite openly mocking and disregarding Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics" (Muñoz Valenzuela 101), Tom chooses to sacrifice himself nonetheless during the assault against López and Lara in order to save Rubén from being mortally wounded (116). Rubén does wonder from time to time if there is anything at all keeping his cybernetic creation from simply killing him and taking his place (114), but ultimately praises his robot for staying above human pettiness and vice:

Mi experiencia era que Tom estaba muy lejos de ciertos vicios, al menos de los más dañinos y de los más execrables: su inteligencia y organismo superior lo aseguraban, estaba lejos de nuestros devaneos sobre la vida y la muerte, porque esas eran categorías puramente humanas. Y si estaba lejos de la dialéctica de la vida y la muerte, estaba también distante del temor, de la ambición, de la tentación de vivir en el momento. Una vez más el verdadero peligro estaba en el hombre [...] Nada en Tom me hacía suponer una actitud de *Hal* o *Terminator*; al revés. A fin de cuentas, parecía mucho más sensible y generoso que todas las personas que conocí antes de él. (131)

Tom's high moral sense and responsibility, congruent with the post-dictatorial masculine model identified by Valdés and Olavarría, set him apart from iconic posthuman males with similar intelligence and capabilities. Muñoz Valenzuela injects his robot character with a sense of justice that makes him uniquely Chilean.

Rubén's monologue on his robot's moral superiority is reminiscent of a very similar argument Samuel Butler made over a century before *Flores para un Cyborg* in his

essay “Darwin Among the Machines.” Butler expressed that “self-regulating, self-acting” machines would eventually replace humans as the superior race due to their higher intellect and moral grounds⁵⁵. However, some critics interpret Butler’s position as something completely different from the laudatory spiel by Muñoz Valenzuela’s protagonist. For Miller, Butler was simply offering a satirical comment on a potentially over-technologized future world. In addition, Miller finds a significant contradiction inherent in posthuman figures. Despite their apparent superiority, machines are overly dependent on humans for their design, creation, and maintenance: “The Tin Man needs Dorothy to oil him, R2D2 needs Luke Skywalker to overhaul him, the mighty golem needs the rabbi’s spell. That masterful stride and calm of mind are illusory, the result of patient human ministrations” (Miller 297). This is particularly evident in Muñoz Valenzuela’s novel. Tom dreams of being independent and is very proactive in his actions, yet depends completely on Rubén for repairs, upgrades, and is an unconditional ally to his creator above anything else. In a way, the android acts as the creator’s child who, despite becoming fully-developed and (relatively) self-sufficient by the end of the narrative, refuses to abandon the man who gave him life and nurtured him into what he’s become—in other words, a father.

⁵⁵ Butler’s wording itself is similar to that of Ruben’s: “In the course of ages we shall find ourselves the inferior race. Inferior in power, inferior in that moral quality of self-control, we shall look up to them as the acme of all that the best and wisest man can ever dare to aim at. No evil passions, no jealousy, no avarice, no impure desires will disturb the serene might of those glorious creatures. Sin, shame, and sorrow will have no place among them. Their minds will be in a state of perpetual calm, the contentment of a spirit that knows no wants, is disturbed by no regrets. Ambition will never torture them. Ingratitude will never cause them the uneasiness of a moment. The guilty conscience, the hope deferred, the pains of exile, the insolence of office, and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes - these will be entirely unknown to them” (Butler 3)

The posthuman ideal envisioned by Donna Haraway denies categorically the cyborg's need for a father: "Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden [...] The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project" (151). This is definitely not the case in *Flores para un cyborg*. Not only is the father-(cyber)son bond central to the narrative, but the very "model of the organic family" is, as previously explained, a definite goal shared by both Rubén and Tom. From the moment Rubén decides to pass his last name, Arancibia, onto his robotic creation (Muñoz Valenzuela 23) to the android's (temporary) death, a time when Rubén realizes his true feelings for Tom, it is clear that the organic protagonist cares about his cybernetic counterpart above anyone else, including human lovers, relatives, and friends:

Sabía lo importante que era para mí el cyborg: mucho más que una creación preciada, un hijo o un amigo; era casi una parte de mí mismo, una prolongación que en el fondo reverenciaba al reconocer en ella valores y aptitudes superiores. Más aún cuando había entregado su vida (o su existencia) por salvarnos de una muerte cierta. (122)

The fantasy of male-only reproduction, be it through cloning or robot-building, is a well-established, gendered trope in science fiction (Battaglia 500). What sets Muñoz Valenzuela's novel apart from similarly-themed narratives is its deep focus on the homosocial, practically familial bond between Tom and Rubén. Muñoz Valenzuela develops thoroughly the relationship between these two male characters and, despite adding liberal dashes of testosterone to some of their interactions, he also explores the more sensitive, emotional aspects of their relationship. The human-machine link between

Rubén and Tom is easily the most detailed, complex one among all the texts analyzed in this dissertation. *Flores para un cyborg* is, by no means, a perfect novel, but it does deserve praise in this respect.

Tom's greatest aspiration is, evidently, to be a (manly) man. Another way to achieve this goal involves technological prowess. Tom's knack for helping Rubén out of convoluted scientific jams and the ease with which the android designs cybernetic parts for himself, such as his legs (Muñoz Valenzuela 23) and penis (76), are notorious but hardly surprising. After all, there is a long tradition of tech-savvy "male" robots and cyborgs in both literature and film. Anne Balsamo infers this phenomenon to be a reflection of the gendered expectations weaved around the STEM fields throughout history: "Stereotypically, rationality is associated with masculinity. In this, cyborgs and men are compatible images which mutually support cultural associations among masculinity, rationality, technology, and science" (147). Moreover, Balsamo sees a rift between male and female cybernetic bodies as portrayed in science fiction films, where the former appear to be significantly more technologically developed and inclined than the latter. Latin American science fiction literature does not seem to avoid this paradigm either.

Among all the posthuman female figures analyzed in the previous chapter of this dissertation, the most technological(ly apt) of them was Leticia/Magnolia, the fembot in Guzmán Wolffer's novel *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*. On the one hand, Tom and Leticia/Magnolia seem to be relatively on par regarding their level of activity and decisive roles within their own narratives. Additionally, both characters are equipped

with similarly advanced cybernetic parts⁵⁶ and seem equally comfortable using them and interacting with other computers and devices. On the other hand, Tom is portrayed as a technological genius, while Leticia/Magnolia is not. The former is allowed to design new technologies and is even featured as a contributor in Rubén's published research (23). The latter does not get a chance to create or even install new technologies, even though plenty of opportunities for it (Lupus' cybernetic prostheses come to mind) arise. This can be interpreted as reverse birthing: male posthuman figures are able to engender new cybernetic creations while their female counterparts are not. Thus, cybernetic beings sometimes fail to destabilize the boundaries Haraway hoped they would. Even when they (re)present seemingly new configurations and identities, they may still uphold hegemonic gender stereotypes and divisions (Balsamo 154).

All in all, Tom stands out as one of the most unique robot characters explored in this research project. His personality, goals, and thoughts are far more complex than those of androids like Cádiz Ávila's Bil Tu. Tom is more active and engaging than the ambiguously-sexed machines which will be analyzed in upcoming sections of this chapter. Despite sharing some important traits with previously studied fembots (such as indistinguishable human shape, exceptional intelligence, and the ability to experience emotions), Tom enjoys a position of power vis-à-vis characters like Leticia/Magnolia, Minerva, and Samantha. Tom is constructed as a sexual being, but is never sexualized. Unlike his female counterparts, his anatomy is not fetishized—in fact, it is seldom described. Satisfying other characters' sexual needs is never Tom's purpose. The robot

⁵⁶ The only difference being that Leticia/Magnolia has (practically super-human) genitals, while Tom lacks this anatomical feature until the end of *Flores para un cyborg*.

himself does experience sexual needs, and actively seeks ways to address these. Above all and all throughout, Tom is constructed as a subject, not an object, as are all of the other cybernetic characters—both male and female—we have analyzed. There is one fundamental reason why Tom is saved from the objectification plaguing his counterparts in similar narratives: He was not made to fulfill a sexual fantasy but rather to calm a human ego disturbed by the prospect of mortality and identity loss.

Channeling Baudrillard, Telotte asserts that futuristic, posthuman bodies signal a disconcerting loss of identity (150). Such cybernetic simulacra are introduced in an effort to prove human existence and reassert individual identities when these are threatened by outside phenomena. In *Flores para un cyborg*, Rubén's anxiety and compulsion to prove and—to an extent—reinforce his existence is justified within the context of Chilean (post) dictatorial history. A survivor of forced disappearance and torture, Rubén has learned to secure his own survival and place in the world at any cost after such traumatic experiences. Tom is the vehicle through which Rubén hopes to achieve this: a more resilient, more intelligent, non-aging version of himself that, barring any unforeseen incidents, is sure to carry on his legacy for generations. Perhaps Tom's (temporary) death is so difficult for Rubén not simply because he had bonded so well with the robot, but because it served as a reminder that Rubén's own mortality was unavoidable despite the aid of a seemingly invincible technology:

Deseaba intensamente que volviese, fuera donde fuera que hubiese partido; era como si hubiera perdido una parte propia, aunque a veces tan distinta que se acercaba por eso mismo, porque a veces era como me gustaría ser muy en el fondo, en esa zona que no nos gusta mirar, o quizás porque lo admiraba y lo intuía

superior a mí: el simple hombrecillo mortal superado por su obra mecánica milagrosa. (148)

Although *Flores para un cyborg* is not the first science fiction narrative to feature a (robotic) clone of its own creator⁵⁷, Muñoz Valenzuela takes this paradigm to a new level by tying it to historical memory and—albeit subtly—national themes. This is something that cannot be said of similar posthumanist Latin American science fiction works, which show a definite trend toward escapism and avoidance of sensitive socio-historical topics.

Could Tom then be considered a truly Chilean—and Latin American—robot? An assessment based on physical qualities would certainly be problematic and inconclusive: Latin Americanness cannot—and should not—be measured in terms of race. Indeed, the descriptions of Tom's physique provided in the novel are scant. Yet, given the pervasiveness of distinctly white, Europeanized robots in the works analyzed in this dissertation, it bears mentioning that Tom's looks do not automatically fit into that same category. In fact, the few physical descriptions of the android point toward a very generic, ethnically ambiguous construction that could be assumed to be mestizo or white just the same: A dark haired adult man with brown eyes. With that said, the question remains: why do Muñoz Valenzuela and other Latin American science fiction authors not inject more diverse, complex ethnic components into their posthuman characters, especially when robots and cyborgs are infinitely more customizable figures than humans?

⁵⁷ Susan Seidelman's *Making Mr. Right* (1987) and even Harold Ramis' *Multiplicity* (1996) fall into this category as well. Both films depict male protagonists that make (nearly) identical copies of themselves, but they do so in a much more light-hearted way than Muñoz Valenzuela's novel.

Physical matters aside, Tom's political alignments are definitely colored by the anti-Pinochet spirit of Muñoz Valenzuela's novel. Even though the robot's personality has been largely informed by classic Hollywood standards and North American media, his actions and decisions are all linked to his creator's project of revenge against former regime torturers and restitution for all the pain suffered during the Pinochet era. Rubén concedes that he has shared in passing his political views with Tom, but never with the goal of indoctrinating the android:

jamás le inculqué juicios políticos ni normas de ética o de conducta. Él había llegado por sí mismo a sus propias convicciones, sin interferencias de ninguna clase [...] cierto que me había interrogado en numerosas oportunidades sobre mi pequeño país y su historia convulsionada [...] y cierto es que yo le di mi óptica amarga y cínica del tema. ¡Cómo evitar transmitir mi escepticismo positivista! (132)

Tom also stands apart from iconic vengeful posthuman figures—such as the Terminator—because he is a very subtle agent. Part of a new breed of humanized technologies identified by Miller, Tom “*infiltrates* rather than invades” (Miller 294, author's emphasis). He does not storm in or terrorize mankind indiscriminately, like many a silver screen action android. Instead, Tom moves quietly, from the inside, and deals efficiently with targets without leaving a trace nor raising any suspicions. In a way, these silent assaults are more disturbing than the flashy robot attacks that appear in much posthumanist science fiction. They resonate with the warning message inscribed all throughout *Flores para un cyborg*: It is not unknown evils from the outside but familiar, stealthy ones from the inside that often wreak the most havoc.

Before concluding our reading of Muñoz Valenzuela's novel, some brief comments on the development of female characters are necessary. The novel shows a disproportionate amount of male characters in relation to female ones, most of which appear as groups rather than as individuals. Women in these groups have no discernible names and are simply referred to as "unas chicas norteamericanas de pregrado" (18), "las muchachas rubias, hermosas y atléticas de la televisión" (25), "entusiastas muchachas que lloraron cual Magdalenas en el aeropuerto [por la partida de Rubén y Gerardo]" (36), "azafatas de piernas largas y suaves" (37), and "un grupo de jóvenes tescistas atraídas por un derroche de simpatía [de Tom]" (48), among others. These group representations are especially problematic. They deprive female characters of any signs of individuality and reduce them either to their potential as sex partners—in most cases—or else as targets for sexualizing male gazes for Rubén, Tom, and their (heterosexual) male friends.

The few female characters who do have names—Beatriz Manosalva, Ximena Arancibia, and Cinthia [sic] Morrison—are developed minimally and relegated to secondary roles. The three are partially involved in Rubén and Tom's missions against ex-regime officials. However, Beatriz and Ximena are never active in violent situations—in fact, were it not for sporadic mentions of their names in those scenes, it would be impossible to know they were there. Meanwhile, Cinthia Morrison is constructed as a very violent character—both physically and verbally—who does her share of killing remorselessly. But her character is also mocked, even repudiated, for embodying a nontraditional gender identity (she goes by the name "Eustaquio Paredes," wears men's

clothing and short hair)⁵⁸, and her transgressions to the codes of heteronormative femininity earn her a gruesome death, after which only dental records can confirm her identity from an otherwise ravaged corpse (162).

One additional female character worth discussing, albeit briefly, is the Black stripper Rubén meets once at a night club. The nameless sex worker, as well as the prostitutes of African descent mentioned on page 77, embody black female sexuality as savage and animalistic. As in the case of La Morena in Guzmán Wolffer's novel, a major fetishistic element appears in all descriptions of this character, reducing her body to its sexual parts and compulsively bringing up her uniquely large breasts and buttocks. The language used to describe the stripper's physical attributes is the most sexually graphic in the entire novel, including crude references to her "enormes senos y nalgas espléndidas," "pezones rosados y erectos," and "vulva ardiente" (193). The choice of words for this passage marks a sharp departure from the somewhat refined vocabulary used in sexually explicit scenes involving white characters, such as Beatriz—where words like "busto" and "perfume"/"aroma" are far more common (62, 66, 67, 69, 82, 83). Unlike La Morena in *Que Dios se apiade*, the life of the nameless stripper in *Flores para un cyborg* is spared. Nonetheless, her character is said to be infected with "las siete plagas" and "una gonorrea fija" (193), thus coloring Black (female) sexuality as risky, even *sick*, as opposed to the safe, albeit inane, sexuality of the many promiscuous white women featured in the novel's earlier sections. Evidently, some of the more prominent examples

⁵⁸ Morrison is described as a blonde bombshell who, after putting on baggy clothes, dying her hair black, and wearing dark contact lenses, now resembles "un peón sucio" (106). Expressions such as "marimacho" (106), "poco femenino" (117) and "con escaso refinamiento" (118) are commonly used to refer to this character. Rubén also makes a very problematic remark about pushing Morrison toward a more hegemonic version of womanhood: "no sería mala idea tratar de reafloar su femineidad. Hay un buen premio esperando, ¿no?" (106)

of (Latin American) posthumanist science fiction become lost at the intersection between race and sexualities. This phenomenon is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Flores para un cyborg stands out for its focus on male bonding—homosociality—and masculinities, offering more detailed accounts than is usual in posthumanist science fiction. Moreover, the construction and embodiment of said masculinities are uniquely represented in Tom the android, whose unexpected amalgamation of Classic Hollywood and contemporary Chilean masculinities makes him a corny, often irritating, at times charming, but nonetheless memorable character. He is, without a doubt, the most detailed and developed posthuman figure analyzed in this dissertation. Additionally, Tom's connection to Rubén's anxieties regarding identity and historical memory set him apart from similar characters and add a distinctly Chilean hue to his construction⁵⁹. However, Muñoz Valenzuela's robot protagonist is certainly not flawless. The character's rigid, hegemonic sexual goals and expectations leave much to be desired, especially in a genre where imagination and ingenuity appear to have few limits. Furthermore, the novel's treatment of gender, sexualities, and race is often problematic, with women and ethnically othered characters taking a backseat to "white," middle-class male characters. While this is not unusual in Latin American posthumanist science fiction (as my readings of "Minerva" and *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros* show), it is symptomatic of a problem of the genre worldwide, which still needs to be more fully acknowledged and addressed.

⁵⁹ The broader political implications of *Flores para un cyborg*, as well as the text's commentaries on national history, memory, and their symbiosis with technology and posthumanism will be analyzed in future sections of this dissertation.

Muñoz Valenzuela's novel fits in within the paradigm of "science fiction as a Boys' Club." Perhaps the novel's insistence on homosociality and its compliance with well-known standards of hegemonic group masculinity—emotional detachment, competitiveness, and sexual objectification of women (Bird 122-123)—could be read as an attempt at homosociality between text and reader. Obviously, not all readers of science fiction are male nor aligned with hegemonic, heteronormative expressions of manhood. Nonetheless, taking into account the widespread misconception that this is the genre's main audience does help explain why works such as *Flores para un cyborg*, *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*, "Minerva," and countless other science fiction narratives in the same vein resort to such raunchiness, objectification of female characters, and stereotypically macho/masculine elements. Perhaps these texts openly accept (and accentuate) hegemonic, recognizable codes of masculinity in order to fit in within homosocial settings. Believable, complex female and non-heteronormative characters are expendable as long as the *bromance* can be kindled.

Juana + La cibernética:

Elena Aldunate's "Juana y la cibernética" first appeared in 1963 as a standalone volume in the collection "El viento en la llama," compiled by Armando Menedín and published by Talleres de Arancibia Hermanos (Castellano Girón). Later republished in 1967 as part of Aldunate's short-story collection *El señor de las mariposas*, this particular piece narrates the experiences of Juana, an extremely shy factory worker and spinster who becomes hopelessly trapped inside the factory where she works on New Year's Eve, all by herself. Juana must find a way to survive without food, a suitable place to rest, or human contact for three days and nights. During this time, Juana struggles with

acute hunger, insomnia, and a heightened sense of loneliness. These feelings prompt her to seek companionship in the machine she uses at work, a large industrial robot that perforates holes in metal sheets used for construction. Juana starts hearing the machine call her name and develops a strong sexual desire for it, which leads to several erotic encounters between Juana and her machine and, ultimately, her death as she attempts to be penetrated by this piece of equipment.

The narrative, exempt of high-tech imagery, is obviously not placed in a futuristic setting (Guijarro-Crouch 14). Moreover, it is difficult to determine a clearly delineated time period for the events in Aldunate's story, as it does not contain elements linked to any specific era. Even so, the tone—sometimes playful, sometimes ominous—has a definite dystopian flavor, not unlike that of posthuman science fiction classics like Čapek's *R.U.R.*, where machines overpower humans in the end. Although "Juana y la cibernética" was the earliest published work among all the narratives analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3, I contend that Aldunate's short story is more progressive than similar works in terms of its portrayal of women's agency, control over their own bodies, and experiences of pleasure and sexuality. I also find this text unique because, without featuring future gadgets and advanced science, it is unequivocally posthuman and presents the union of human and machine in an unexpected way that is primal yet refreshing. By the end of the story a cyborg becomes visible, but it is not the one the reader would expect.

Aldunate's short story, however, is not the only Latin American sci-fi work featuring romantic/erotic interactions between a human female and a machine. There are parallels between "Juana y la cibernética" and Cádiz Ávila's "Bil Tu," starting with their

focus on sexually frustrated female protagonists and the cybernetic entities they use to fill the sexual voids in their lives. Both An, in her late thirties, and Juana, in her mid-forties, struggle with rigid societal norms linking age and desirability, and wish they had more opportunities to engage in erotic activities. Neither Aldunate's nor Cádiz Ávila's narratives feature a male gaze, and both short stories focus on the female experience of (sexual) pleasure in a more detailed way than do any of the works by male authors studied so far. However, these two short stories also differ greatly in certain key aspects. For example, Juana is explicitly portrayed as an impoverished, oppressed blue-collar worker living in a small rented room. To the contrary, An is depicted as a middle-class woman with a financially adequate—albeit monotonous—job, a house of her own, and enough resources to purchase custom-made androids at the touch of a button. But despite her unprivileged socioeconomic status, Juana is portrayed as significantly more sexually open-minded and libidinous than An, who seems rather prudish in comparison. Additionally, the sexual content of “Juana y la cibernética” is much more overt, detailed, and abundant than that of “Bil Tu.” Juana has several intense erotic encounters with her machine, while An, despite her deep desire for her robot, never engages in anything beyond meaningful glances and conversations with Bil Tu.

Perhaps the most unique feature of “Juana y la cibernética” is the main character's lack of yearning for a specific person. An longs for the younger, more vital version of her husband, Bil. Samantha panics at the thought of Leonard, her one true love, replacing her with a perfected clone of herself. Eduardo and Anastasio compete for the love of robotic temptress Minerva. Cold-hearted Lupus melts at Leticia/Magnolia's every joke and seduction. Even Tom, the robot, is moved to tears at the prospect of losing Paulina if she

ever finds out he is not human. Juana, however, has no target for her affections. In fact, after years of feeling sorry for not finding love, Aldunate's protagonist throws the entire idea of romantic love in the garbage and jumps into emotion-free, visceral machine sex with reckless abandon:

Un deseo tiránico se apodera de ella. Quiere sentir; no importa qué, pero sentir violentamente..., violentamente. Ambivalencia de dolor y placer, miedo y entrega. Su respiración comienza a seguir el jadeo de la máquina y vive, vive... Aferrada a ese ser tibio, duro, firme, viscoso, dominante, quiere más. Derecha, izquierda, arriba, abajo. Hasta la locura, hasta el dolor. (Aldunate 91)

Ultimately, all Juana wishes is to feel something and escape the numbness of her existence. Whose aid she can use to accomplish this, be it human or machine, is not an issue to this character.

Of all the narratives studied thus far, Aldunate's short story is one of the few featuring a sexual merging between human and machine in which the boundaries of the flesh are literally obliterated⁶⁰. N. Katherine Hayles expresses an ambivalent position regarding the mutilation and breaking of bodily boundaries inherent in the transition into a more posthuman, cyborg corporeality, which can be understood as both deforming and liberating (*Posthuman* 215). In "Juana y la cibernética," the final dismembering of the protagonist as she passionately makes love to her machine means both a complete destruction of Juana's body but also an extremely liberating act. Once the protagonist's

⁶⁰ The only other instance of flesh-destroying posthuman contact appears in Guzmán Wolffer's novel, when La Morena is violated and killed by her computer. Nevertheless, such violence against the human (female) body has radically different connotations in each case. In "Juana y la cibernética," it is willingly sought—not an attack—and represents (sexual) freedom for Juana. In *Que Dios se apiade*, it is an undesired attack meant to punish La Morena, an obvious transgressor of hegemonic sexual expectations for women.

body is pulled apart, she is indisputably dead. And yet, in fulfilling her desire to be one with the machine, Juana surpasses the confines of her physical self and, by extension, the social limits imposed upon it (gender and economic discrimination, ageism, etc.).

Claudia Springer's reading of human (sexual) attraction toward machines from a psychoanalytic perspective that sometimes overlaps with Hayles' idea of disembodiment: "the pleasure of the interface, in Lacanian terms, results from the computer's offer to lead us into a microelectronic imaginary where our bodies are obliterated and our consciousness integrated into the matrix" (37). This electronic matrix is understood by Springer as a sort of womb, which may be interpreted as both alluring and terrifying based on Freud's theory of the Uncanny: the simultaneous repulsion and attraction, or *unheimlich* response, has its origins in the womb, a place "where we experienced our earliest living moment at the same time that our insentience resembled death" (Springer 37). This is evident in "Juana y la cibernética." The protagonist has moments of inexplicable attraction to her machine, as well as episodes of fear and hesitation toward it. On several occasions, Juana turns off the machine(s) after having thoughts about them taking control away from humans, either in the form of work substitutes (Aldunate 77) or by coming to life and killing people (87). Nonetheless, the protagonist becomes increasingly curious and drawn to the machine until, finally, fear and attraction fuse together as Juana willfully engages in violent, deadly sex with this mechanical apparatus.

Nonetheless, Juana's gruesome ending is, by no means, an undesired accident. Throughout the narrative, the protagonist flirts with the idea of being perforated by the machine, of human blood and industrial oil mixing together until they cannot be told apart (Aldunate 75-76, 84-85). Juana wishes to merge herself with the machine, a desire

that, like many bizarre technological fantasies found in contemporary culture, may be explained through what Amanda Fernbach terms pre-oedipal or “matrix” fetishism. It is common for pre-oedipal fantasies to “involve the disavowal of not just the body’s lack but of the body itself, as the body’s boundaries are no longer recognized, and the self becomes part of a larger entity” (Fernbach 31). Juana’s fixation with being penetrated and torn apart by her industrial machine is not too different from techno-fetishes involving cyber-prosthesis and cyborgification of the organic. It does fit within the decadent technofetishes observed by Fernbach, which ditch “universality and wholeness” in favor of hybridism, partiality, and immunity from categorization and monolithic ideas of identity (170-171). Such technofetishes also destabilize the concept of “The Perfect Body” presented by the beauty and advertising industries by opposing homogeneous standards of beauty and instead proposing hybrid, unique bodies where the union of flesh and technology may result in a myriad heterogeneous combinations (Fernbach 172). Even before joining her machine, Juana goes against the grain in terms of societal expectations of female beauty and behavior: single and virgin past forty, too thin, too poor, too exhausted. Prompting Juana to rip her own body to pieces in such a gruesome yet pleasure-filled way may just be Aldunate’s ironic way to reaffirm this anti-normative stance through a literal disavowal of the (female) body and all standards and expectations surrounding it.

Any analysis of human/machine hybrids would be incomplete without acknowledging Haraway’s cyborg theories. As outlined in “A Cyborg Manifesto,” cyborgs—hybrid entities that, either literally or symbolically, fuse together contradictory elements, such as organic and artificial parts—transgress patriarchal orders and

destabilize institutions, systems and dichotomies by blurring (or even erasing) the boundaries between them. There is indeed a cyborg in Aldunate's story, but it is not the one the reader would expect. The industrial machine Juana operates at work is, at the end of the day, simply a machine. It does not change or transcend its initial state in any way, and after physically joining with the protagonist it does not absorb her human qualities but rather remains a completely mechanical being. Steel primes over flesh in the end: "La carne calla. El acero sigue buscando, arriba, abajo, derecha, izquierda. Enloquecido, implacable, posesivo. Arriba, abajo, derecha, izquierda, sobre el silencio" (Aldunate 93).

Juana, however, develops into a less literal yet still effective version of a cyborg as described by Haraway. At the outset, she is a transgressor of prescribed gender roles by escaping marriage and the constant preoccupation with beauty and consumerism that filled the existence of other women she knew, especially her cousins. As the story progresses, Juana becomes more of a *Harawayan* cyborg by breaking taboos regarding female sexuality: she purposely stares at her naked body and enjoys it; she begins seeking erotic pleasure without shame, both in things little (taking a shower) and big (stimulating herself with the aid of an industrial robot). Eventually, she consciously lets herself die, torn apart by her machine, for the sake of experiencing the ultimate, most climactic mixture of pain and pleasure. This final scene is depicted in terms of a literal joining of human and mechanical parts, reinforcing the idea of the cyborg: "el acero quiere ser piel; las uñas, tuercas; los tendones y engranajes, la energía y la vida, el zumbido y el grito se funden, se mezclan..., se aman" (Aldunate 93). Haraway herself links the cyborg figure to female factory workers, like Juana, whose smallness represents strength rather than detriment to the cyborg by nimbly, stealthily, and unexpectedly allowing them to develop

resistance strategies (Haraway 74). Additionally, Haraway argues that “innocence, and the corollary insistence on victimhood as the only ground for insight, has done enough damage” (77). While Juana is initially portrayed as exploited (she is verbally abused by her superiors, has not received a promotion or raise since she started working at the factory, lives in poverty due to her low-paying, yet time-consuming job, etc.), her evolution in the story shows a shift from victim to actor. Even in the subhuman conditions she experiences while trapped in the factory, she takes full control of her decisions and assumes responsibility for her present and future actions without relying on others nor blaming them:

No puede dormir. ¿Por qué tendría que dormir? Esa es una costumbre adquirida:

‘En la noche se debe dormir’. ‘En la mañana se trabaja, se limpia la casa.

Almuerzo a las doce. Hay que tener hambre...’ ¿Hambre? Luego se retorna al trabajo y a las seis se va al cine; a las ocho hay que tener una cita o leer un libro, o morir de pena. No; en los días que le quedan, ella no seguirá esa corriente; ella romperá estas leyes e impondrá las suyas, satisfará sus deseos postergados. Irá al cine. ¿Por qué no? (Aldunate 82-83)

Con claridad inusitada, Juana comprende que no podrá volver, que no quiere seguir su vida opaca. No más días vacíos. Ésta es su aventura, ¡la única!, la tantas veces ansiada. ¡Y está sucediendo! [...] no más horas perdidas contemplando el vivir ajeno. Ahora, ella también podrá contar. (Aldunate 91-92)

Just as Haraway's cyborg refuses to be an innocent, passive victim, so does Aldunate's protagonist. She is trapped alone, forgotten by the rest of the world, but she won't just sit and cry⁶¹. Instead, Juana pursues her own gratification without shame or regret.

Alone in the factory, sealed from the world but also free from judgment, Juana begins to explore an aspect that previously seemed too forbidden and out of her reach: sex. In her solitude, the character ponders at her lack of sexual experience and, as time goes by and her hunger for food grows, so does her hunger for sex:

de todas sus compañeras de trabajo venía a sucederle a ella este percance idiota. A ella, a la que vivía sola. A ella, que en sus cuarenta y cuatro años no conociera el amor... al hombre. (70)

Ella, una mujer no demasiado religiosa, sin tantos prejuicios, no tan fea..., no sabía físicamente lo que era un hombre, cómo era un hombre. Siempre trabajando, siempre [...] Pospuesta, mal vestida, al margen de la existencia, de los sinsabores y de las alegrías de los demás. Para colmo, tímida. (71)

De pronto, en su cerebro alucinado aparecen una imagen y otra. En una esquina, un hombre y una mujer, ocultos, se besan. Una pieza, un hombre desnudo; el olor denso. Los ojos malignos de su prima. '¡Sal de aquí, chiquilla intrusa!' Diez años, angustia. Y esos ruidos en las noches, quejas, sollozos, risas entrecortadas, como de duendes. Silencio. Manos que se deslizan en la penumbra. Escenas violentas,

⁶¹ Despite some initial, panicked sobbing (Aldunate 69), this character does not cry at all for the rest of the narrative. Juana is excessively hungry, tired, and sometimes delusional, but she does not shed a single tear beyond the third page of the text.

en primer plano, en la pantalla de un cine de barrio. El hombre y la mujer... siempre el hombre y la mujer. (88-89)

Más adelante supo que [el sexo] no tenía nada de maligno ni de prohibido ni de angustioso, pero lo supo a través de un raciocinio, de novelas baratas, de confidencias hechas entre risas forzadas que la dejaron molesta, curiosa, intranquila. Pero su experiencia no vino. (89)

¿Sentirse enamorada? ¿Desear el contacto de un hombre?... Sí, tal vez. (89-90)

At first sight, and considering the time of publication of “Juana y la cibernética,” the old-fashioned concept of heteronormative marriage as the ultimate ambition for women seems very prominent in Aldunate’s narrative. Nonetheless, as the story unfolds the title character undergoes a radical transformation from quiet, submissive wallflower to unapologetic sexual adventurer. By the end of the narrative, Juana no longer yearns for *el hombre* nor laments his absence. Instead, she finds complete fulfillment in raw, painful sex with her machine. To Juana, the ultimate sexual experience can only come from the mixture of violence and pleasure only her industrial robot⁶² can give:

Apetitos insospechados, fiebre, risa, cavidades blandas que ceden, rígidos metales que hieren. Lentamente, el dolor traspasa redes de nervios que estallan rasgando zonas olvidadas. El calor, la fricción, la fuerza, queman con rudo contacto mecánico, encendiendo, iluminando esa que fuera una vida gris. (91)

⁶² Although Juana's machine is not a humanoid, sentient robot like the ones in previously analyzed narratives, it is still a robot in the sense that it is a machine programmed to perform a series of complex tasks on its own. Moreover, it becomes closer to a “traditional” sci-fi robot in that becomes extremely personified throughout the story: Juana hears its voice call her name and feels its desire for her flesh.

Such references to violent sexuality are contrasted against softer sensory descriptions of female pleasure regarding not only Juana's erotic contact with her machine but also her moments of physical and mental self-exploration as she walks naked across the locked factory⁶³. Additionally, Aldunate describes female orgasm in a cyborgian fashion—so to speak—, mixing surreal imagery with descriptions of electrical waves: “la mujer sueña. Sueña un sueño rojo, negro, violento, amarillo brillante; violento. Chispazos, ondas que ondulan la envuelven; ondas que salen de su ser, ondas desconocidas, voluptuosas; extrañas prolongaciones que parecieran salir de un ser ajeno” (91). While the sexual imagery related to Juana's machine is extremely phallic (Juana is constantly described as holding on firmly to the warm, thick, rhythmically moving piston of her machine), the machine is always referred to with feminine nouns (*la máquina*) and pronouns (*ella*), which creates an ambiguous context that makes it difficult—and perhaps pointless—to figure out the gender of this mechanical entity.

The sexual interactions between Juana and the industrial robot also defy heteronormative and patriarchal standards of (female) sexuality by presenting masturbatory acts as a suitable—if not preferable—alternative to traditional heterosexual coitus. As Claudia Springer explains, sex with computers and machines can often be “acknowledged to be solitary; but it is nonetheless represented as a sexual act, a masturbatory fantasy expressed in terms of entering something, but lacking the presence of another human body or mind” (43). Moreover, Springer finds that, despite its status as

⁶³ “Al pasar frente a los grandes espejos, se contempla. Nunca lo hace desnuda.” (80)

“El agua tibia corre acariciante por su piel, por su rostro, por su cabello, por sus manos, por sus hombros huérfanos de dedos masculinos, por sus pequeños pechos aún duros, por sus puntudas caderas yermas, por sus piernas cansadas y sus pies demasiado anchos” (80-81)

“Luego, sonámbula, se pasea desnuda y empapada por la sala. ¡Qué maravillosa sensación! El sol en su piel húmeda, en sus caderas ruborizadas. El aire entre sus pechos y sus piernas. Libre, impúdica, sola” (81)

a staple of male-oriented pornography, female masturbation in science fiction works can often deviate from stereotypical pornographic standards: “its activity distinguishes [the female protagonist] from the conventional passive female object of pornography, and her masturbation is not a prelude to heterosexual sex” (43). This is exactly the case in “Juana y la cibernética,” where the protagonist’s solitary sexual activity is unrelated to the male gaze and appears not as a consolation prize but rather as equal to—or even more desirable than—heterosexual sex.

Despite its 1963 publication date, Aldunate’s story is more ground-breaking in several aspects than later posthuman Latin American sci-fi works. Whereas a great number of similarly-themed narratives keep the organic and the cybernetic bound and separate despite sexual contact, “Juana y la cibernética” features a most literal union of human and machine where the flesh, so carefully preserved by other authors, is completely obliterated. Such a violent depiction is also central to the development of two major themes in Aldunate’s story: female sexual pleasure and techno-fetishes in direct relation to it. Such themes are seldom explored in any of the other sci-fi works included in my analysis. When they are, these themes are approached rather shyly and succinctly by comparison. Additionally, “Juana y la cibernética” stands out for featuring a seemingly asexual machine: it is not humanoid, has no genitals, nor any other expected sexual features. Moreover, the intense sexual interactions between the industrial robot and the protagonist become increasingly complex because they escape categorization: the shape of the machine is phallic but the mechanical entity is an “ella” in the narrative, a definitive break with the heavily heteronormative parameters observed in previously studied works by both male and female Latin American sci-fi authors.

Aldunate's story also stands on its own for its criticism of gender expectations as they intersect with socio-economic status. The text presents a character doomed to be poor for not getting married, and points out her inability to escape financial woes on her own due to unfair labor practices. "La avaricia del señor Wellmann" (Aldunate 69) in this 1963 narrative is, in this sense, not too different from the financial greed that has spawned sweatshops and "maquilas" throughout Latin America and other developing areas in the past few decades. More than 50 years later, the oppressive labor conditions mentioned in "Juana y la cibernética" still ring true for many (female) factory workers whose exhausting work days yield very little—yet very necessary—pay.

The title "Juana y la cibernética" features two seeming opposites, but the "y" between the nouns is not one of exclusion, but rather of union. Juana is not pitted against "la cibernética," she joins it. Even if her physical body disappears in the process, Aldunate's protagonist finds absolute fulfillment in becoming a cyborg, both emotionally (by giving up old ideas of what a woman should be and embracing difference), and physically (by consuming the machine's fluids and letting herself be consumed by the machine). In the end, and in her many contradictions, Juana *is* la cibernética.

Virtual Love, Actual Hate, and Human Disconnection in Gorodischer

Angélica Gorodischer's short story "A la luz de la casta luna electrónica" appeared for the first time in 1973, as part of the collection *Casta luna electrónica*. It features the first comical (mis)adventure of a suspicious character named Trafalgar Medrano, later to star in several of Gorodischer's other hilarious space-travel tales⁶⁴. On

⁶⁴ Gorodischer has written eight additional short stories featuring Trafalgar Medrano and his travels, which she later published, along with "A la luz...", in the form of a collection titled *Trafalgar* (1979).

this particular occasion, Trafalgar stops by the planet Veroboar, a world ruled exclusively by a group of beautiful women denominated Las Mil, during one of his many intergalactic sales trips. Trafalgar is unexpectedly summoned to the governor's office in Verov (the capital of Veroboar). Once there, the beautiful but ruthless governor reprimands Trafalgar for providing reading materials to ordinary Veroboan citizens, an illegal activity. She then confines the salesman to his hotel room, which he must not leave until another member of the Central Government calls him into her office for further questioning. Trafalgar, however, becomes impatient after days of waiting and decides to pay a home visit to this government official. Once there, he finds the officer, whose ornate name he recalls imprecisely as "Guinevera Lapislázuli," naked in her bed, accompanied only by a buzzing machine full of strange buttons. Unsure of what to do next but enticed by the woman, Trafalgar discreetly turns off the machine and proceeds to join Lapislázuli in bed, where they engage in a wild sexual encounter. Upon realizing the machine had been turned off the whole time, Lapislázuli begins screaming and threatens Trafalgar, whom she had mistaken for a hologram of comic book character Mandrake⁶⁵—her pre-set virtual lover. The now terrified salesman has no choice but to run for his life and flee Veroboar without delay in order to escape the death penalty, reserved for anyone who dare defy or even touch Las Mil. Trafalgar makes his way back to Earth and tells his story to an unnamed friend of his, the story's narrator.

As a more renowned Latin American science fiction author, Gorodischer and her works have been studied previously by various critics—"A la luz de la casta luna

⁶⁵ Madrake the Magician is an actual comic strip character created in 1934 by Lee Falk, author of the well-known superhero comic *The Phantom*.

electronica” included. J. Andrew Brown and Jerry Hoeg, for example, have found that Gorodischer’s texts have a “propensity for social commentary” (Hoeg 95) and feature themes such as power abuses and their intersection with race and gender, as well as the constant questioning of gender roles, performances and sexualities (Hoeg 96, Brown 195). In regard to “A la luz...”, Brown observes that Gorodischer inverts gender hierarchies to reinforce the idea that power will inevitably corrupt whoever holds it regardless of gender or race, a theme the author had previously presented in her 1967 story “Los circuitos, las ondas, los ejes, los tableros de control, Equis y Gama”⁶⁶ (Brown 195).

While Brown’s assessment of Gorodischer’s project is accurate, there is much more to “A la luz...” than its evident—but still crucial—subversion of gender hierarchies. Gorodischer destabilizes gender dynamics not only in her treatment of plot and characters, aspects Brown observes, but also through her narrative style. In addition, the author takes gender and power beyond clear-cut binaries. Although it may seem that Gorodischer is simply switching opposites to make a point, she is actually confounding these supposed polar extremes, highlighting gray areas in both and making their complexities more evident. Furthermore, “A la luz...” brings the intersection of beauty and power to the fore while simultaneously questioning the strong social influence of beauty standards for women. Finally, Gorodischer’s text cleverly foreshadows the

⁶⁶ In the futuristic world of “Los circuitos...”, there is a reversal in power where White people are marginalized while Black citizens are at the vanguard in both politics and wealth. This change was prompted by serious mistakes White factions in power made in the past, especially regarding the handling of nuclear weapons (Brown 194-195).

cooling effect of technology in human (sexual) relationships, which is no longer the stuff of (science) fiction.

Critics agree that Gorodischer's works are consistent in their questioning of sexual identities and traditional gender paradigms (Brown 195). However, this is not done in an overt, simplistic, or even moralistic way in "A la luz...". This is the only text included in my analysis of gender and sexualities in Latin American posthuman science fiction where the gender of the author does not match that of the protagonist. Gorodischer does not personify the gender issues she raises in a logically (and expectedly) troubled, yet easy-to-understand female protagonist. Instead, the author presents us with Trafalgar Medrano, a sneaky intergalactic salesman who travels from travel to planet, sweet-talking alien customers into buying his cheap wares—from aspirin to comic books. Nothing about Trafalgar screams "feminist". In fact, the character is terrified—and somewhat resentful—of women during the events in "A la luz...", sometimes referring to them as "víbora[s]" and "brujas" (140). In addition, both Trafalgar and his unnamed friend/narrator add a thick layer of male gaze to Gorodischer's short story. Upon describing the governor of Veroboar, for example, Trafalgar focuses on her physical attributes above anything else, emphasizing her sex appeal: "Flor de gobernador. Rubia, ojos verdes, muy alta, con unas piernas que si las ves te da un ataque [...] y dos manzanitas duras que se le veían a través de la blusa y unas caderas redondas" (140). Trafalgar's friend/narrator adds to this with his color commentary on female attractiveness in relation to age: "a mí con mujeres esplendorosas. Me casé con una hace treinta y siete años" (140).

The clear male gaze in Gorodischer's text is, however, balanced by a societal/power role reversal where women rule the planet Veroboar with an iron fist. "A la luz..." is never so polarized or simple to read, nonetheless. The narrative boasts a very humorous tone where everyone and everything is mocked—women and men, rich and poor, Earth's society and alien ones. The story's ultimate goal seems to be comedy rather than social critique. Yet this does not mean the latter is absent, but rather masterfully intertwined with other key aspects of the text. Just as there is humor and a distinct, colloquial Argentinean tone⁶⁷, there are plenty of elements in "A la luz..." that call to question not only gender hierarchies and inequalities, but also corruption and deviousness at all levels, as well as the role of technology as the root of such evils.

Although men and women appear to be pitted against each other in Gorodischer's story, gender and moral ambiguity are the thematic cornerstones of "A la luz...". First, there is constant questioning of Las Mil's sexuality. As Trafalgar explains the group's sexual rules and rituals to his friend, he mentions Lapislázuli's conscious choice of a heterosexual posthuman partner but also speculates about homosexual polygamy among Las Mil (Gorodischer 150-151). Similarly, the women in this elite circle are portrayed as simultaneously virginal and sexually ravenous. Their titles often contain the words "iluminada" and "casta," yet, as Trafalgar confirms, "tal vez fuera[n] iluminada[s], pero casta[s] no era[n]" (147)⁶⁸. In addition to Las Mil of Veroboar, Trafalgar mentions various alien races with fluid gender paradigms while recounting his (mis)adventures in

⁶⁷ Both Trafalgar and his listening friend/narrator use *voseo* constantly, and expressions such as "piba" (146), "macanadas" (146) "el moño" (147), "ché" (147), and "porteños" (148) are commonly found throughout the text.

⁶⁸ Near the end of the text, Trafalgar emphasizes Las Mil's virginal reputation once more: "Se supone que son vírgenes e inmortales. La gente sospecha, sin embargo, que no son inmortales. Yo sé que no son vírgenes" (150)

outer space. In planet Drenekuta V, for example, “los hombres se maquillan y se enrulan el pelo y se pintan las uñas” (139-140), and the men in Anandaha-A express themselves through dance rather than speech (140). Trafalgar’s own sexuality is ambiguous. Despite his obvious lust for the blonde matriarchs of Veroboar, when his friend teases him about developing “una exquisita inclinación por los jovencitos frágiles, de piel tersa y ojos claros” Trafalgar does not deny having bisexual tendencies (136). Moreover, the protagonist is never completely sure of Lapislázuli’s womanhood, often highlighting his confusion through phrases like “creo que era una mujer” (136), “la mujer que a lo mejor no era” (138), “ya te dije que creo que sí [era una mujer]” (146).

Trafalgar’s confusion is understandable, as Las Mil are ambiguous on several levels. Their sexual practices and preferences are perplexing and elusive, and so is their origin and nature. Are they human or machines? Above all, the group considers posthuman sex far superior to any other kind. Once a year, each member of Las Mil is entitled to go on sexual leave for approximately a week. They must file an official petition first and, while they wait for its approval, other members of Las Mil congratulate them by giving them gifts and throwing lavish parties in their honor (Gorodischer 150-151). Once the petition is officially approved, the member in question spends several days home alone having sex with her machine. The process, as Trafalgar explains, is nothing more than a highly-customizable simulation:

La máquina les da dos cosas: una, alucinaciones visuales, táctiles, auditivas y todo, que responden al modelo que eligieron y que ya está programado en el artefacto. El modelo puede existir o no, puede ser el portero del ministerio o un engendro imaginado por ellas, o, en mi caso, un personaje de historieta de las

malditas revistas que yo mismo le vendí al mecánico. Y dos, todas las sensaciones del orgasmo. (151)

Sex with machines is certainly a joyous occasion for Las Mil. Sex with humans, on the other hand, is a complete aberration to this group, as it becomes evident after the incident between Trafalgar and Lapislázuli. What makes posthuman sex the superior choice in this case? Much like the protagonists of “Minerva,” *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*, “Samantha,” “Bil Tu” and *Flores para un cyborg*, Las Mil may prefer the customizability of machines over the unpredictability of human interactions and the species’ “imperfections.” However, as Trafalgar points out, Las Mil’s predilection for machines may be a sign that these women are actually machines themselves:

¿Cómo sé si Las Mil tienen la misma fisiología que las mujeres comunes? ¿Cómo sé si no las alteran? [...] ¿Cómo sé si Las Mil no son máquinas ellas también y si no la han fusilado o algo peor a la hija del flaco igual que a todas las que aspiraron a ser como ellas, cuestión de quedarse con la plata y seguir haciendo el amor con otras máquinas? (Gorodischer 153)

Trafalgar’s constant questioning of whether Lapislázuli is a woman or not takes on another layer of meaning, this time in regard to whether she is human or robot. The text never reveals whether Las Mil are fully organic, fully cybernetic, or a hybrid. In any case, they are certainly posthuman in two ways: first, they embrace virtuality and information patterns as an integral part of their sexuality, and second, they operate as a collective rather than individually. According to Hayles, virtual reality and similar technologies—such as holograms and sensorial simulations—are highly intriguing and enticing because they evoke a parallel reality that intersects the subject’s perceived reality

in multiple ways (14). This way, information cuts through the flesh without physically violating its boundaries. This virtuality—that is, information patterns interpenetrating material objects (Hayles 13-14)—hybridizes the subject, thus creating a posthuman experience without the need to fuse physical cybernetic and human parts. Hayles asserts that, indeed, a posthuman subject need not be a literal cyborg:

Whether or not interventions have been made on the body, new models of subjectivity emerging from such fields as cognitive science and artificial life imply that even a biologically unaltered homo sapiens counts as posthuman. The defining characteristics involve the construction of subjectivity, not the presence of nonbiological components. (4)

In order to become posthuman, the construction of subjectivity Hayles mentions should rely on collectivity, where multiple parts contribute to the creation of a whole (3-4). Las Mil are, above all, a collective. The group's name itself implies fragmentation into multiple smaller pieces, but its basis on the number "one" gives the idea of a single unity⁶⁹. Additionally, they don't appear to operate alone but rather as a group: If one member desires to take time off, the rest must be notified and grant permission as a group. They do not act individually. Similarly, the rest of the population refers to them as a faction, without differentiating ranks within the group. There are many women in Las Mil, but they all share the same look—young, slender, attractive, blonde physique—and

⁶⁹ The denomination Las Mil is also reminiscent of binary code, as it is formed by only the numbers one and zero, which are the basis for this renowned computer coding language. This is yet another way in which this group is marked as posthuman within Gorodischer's text.

the same outlook—sex with humans is forbidden but sex with machines is celebrated. “Mil” and “Una” at the same time.

Although their characterization as posthuman blonde bombshells is nothing new within the Latin American scifi context, Las Mil stand apart from posthuman characters such as Guzmán Wolffer’s Leticia/Magnolia and Araya’s Minerva because the former’s physical beauty is inextricably tied to social, political, and economic power⁷⁰. As Trafalgar explains, female beauty trumps lineage and social connections when it comes to joining the government in Veroboar:

La posición de Las Mil no es hereditaria, no son hijas de familias notables. Salen del pueblo. Cualquier chica que sea linda pero muy linda y consiga, cosa que no es fácil ni mucho menos, reunir una suma determinada antes de empezar a arrugarse, puede aspirar a ser una de Las Mil. Si llega, repudia familia, pasado y clase. Las otras la pulen, la educan y después la largan. Y lo único que tienen que hacer de ahí en adelante es pasar bien, ser cada vez más rica porque todo el mundo trabaja para ella, y gobernar Veroboar. (Gorodischer 150)

The mixture of physical, social, and sexual attractiveness identified as sexual capital (Hakim 501) plays a much more important role than other kinds of capital traditionally linked to power, be it economic, cultural, or social. This is not to say that the latter are irrelevant in Gorodischer’s text, but they are secondary to erotic capital in the case of Las Mil. As explained by Hakim, “erotic capital has greater value when it is linked to high

⁷⁰ The word “casta,” used both in the full title of this story (“A la luz de la casta luna electronica”) and the official titles for members of Las Mil may, then, not be a synonym for chaste, as Trafalgar assumes, but rather a reference to these women’s caste and their elevated sociopolitical position in Veroboar.

levels of economic, cultural, and social capital [and] is thus partially linked to social stratification” (503). Indeed, Las Mil are at the highest stratus in their planet because they are incredibly rich and involved in politics in addition to being perpetually young and beautiful. However, their only way to reach this position is through gender—female only—and outstanding attractiveness. In this sense, Gorodischer’s narrative highlights two issues: first the simultaneous power and oppressiveness of contemporary female beauty standards, and second, the destructive effect of restricting power to only one gender.

Through the text, Las Mil are admired for their physical allure, though they more feared than revered. Their cruelty toward anyone who dares defy them and their constant abuses of power lead other characters to abhor them. Trafalgar, for example, narrowly escapes execution by Las Mil and spends the next few weeks unable to function normally, terrified perpetually of the pretty, blonde matriarchs of Veroboar. Similarly, Veroboan characters such as “el flaco” keep low profiles, remain in permanent caution, and obey Las Mil unconditionally in order to avoid this elite’s ruthless punishment. By the end of Gorodischer’s story, female beauty has become a symbol of both power and monstrosity, perhaps echoing the duplicitous nature of the beauty industry and its contemporary standards: simultaneously lovely and crushing.

As observed by Brown and Hoeg, respectively, Gorodischer’s recurring inversion of gender and power hierarchies suggests that “power corrupts and that it does not matter which gender or which race holds power, it will inevitably result in oppression” (Brown 195). This certainly holds true in “A la luz...,” yet corruption does not affect those in power exclusively. Revoking men’s political and social influence has led to a tyrannical

rule where Las Mil get away with using all of the planet's economic resources for themselves and leaving the rest of the population in complete misery, without being challenged⁷¹. The matriarchs are clearly corrupt, but characters with no sociopolitical or economic power, such as El Flaco or the cab driver, are not immune to moral depravity. The cabby drives Trafalgar to his ship so he can escape Veroboar after he receives a hefty sum from the latter, despite the fact that Trafalgar has become public enemy no. 1 in that planet (Gorodischer 152). Similarly, El Flaco is well aware of Las Mil's questionable practices and tyrannical rule yet aspires to sell out his own daughter, who is "más linda y más rubia que Ver⁷²," to Las Mil (151). Gorodischer, then, presents a fantastic realm where not just power but the mere promise of it—in the form of money—leads to corruption and dishonesty, and both rich and poor, women and men, are susceptible to such evils. As the nameless narrator remarks, "No se puede confiar en las mujeres" (149). And as Trafalgar replies, "en los hombres tampoco" (150). No one is completely free from guilt or safe from temptation in Gorodischer's narrative. Power corrupts, yet seldom in a clear-cut, neatly divided way.

Despite being a humorous, seemingly light-hearted tale, "A la luz..." presents the reader with a markedly dystopian vision of future technologies. It has been widely theorized that, once virtual reality becomes widely accessible, activities such as travel, medical training, product testing, and entertainment of various kinds will be replicable through virtual simulation and thus become significantly more affordable to the general

⁷¹ Extreme opulence and extreme poverty are contrasted at various points throughout the text, highlighting a clear disdain toward Las Mil: "Todo es miserable y triste en Veroboar. Todo menos Las Mil" (Gorodischer 143). "Miseria, mugre y barro y olor a enfermedad y a podrido por todos lados. Eso es Veroboar. Eso y mil mujeres espantosamente ricas y ponderosas que hacen lo que quieren con el resto del mundo" (149)

⁷² Ver is the sun of Veroboar, after which the planet is named.

public (Bletter, Todd). However, in Gorodischer's universe, virtual reality has reached development heights that are still the stuff of fantasy today, yet these technologies are reserved only for the elite. Virtual reality's potential to improve life in Veroboar is wasted, and its private, frivolous use sets a dangerous trend: deeming human contact not only obsolete but also abhorrent. Slavoj Žižek proposes that new posthuman sexual trends which do away with requiring multiple human actors—much like the machine sex Las Mil favor—will inevitably lead to humanity's downfall:

The end of sexuality in the much celebrated “posthuman” self-cloning entity expected to emerge soon, far from opening up the way to pure spirituality, will simultaneously signal the end of what is traditionally designated as the uniquely human spiritual transcendence. All the celebrating of the new ‘enhanced’ possibilities of sexual life that Virtual Reality offers cannot conceal the fact that, once cloning supplements sexual difference, the game is over. (Žižek 2008)

The cloning against which Žižek warns us—the creation electronic facsimiles of humans and using them as sexual partners—seems too far from our current technological means. However, the effects of replacing humans with machines in relationships, both sexual and nonsexual, are already palpable. Hyper-realistic VR and convincing humanoid robots may not have been developed yet, but there certainly are enough gadgets and software that redefine socialization and interaction today. Couples miles apart can simulate mutual physical contact with the aid of devices such as Tachilab's “iFeel_IM” hug robot. The Vstroker, an interactive USB attachment for the famous sex toy Fleshlight, is currently marketed as an enhancing device for POV pornography, allowing the user to simulate sex with a porn star of their choice. New and (much) improved

virtual reality experiences are in current development, for devices such as Google Glass and Oculus Rift, many of which are intended for cybersex. Even technologies as ubiquitous as smart phones and social media are changing human interaction—both sexually and non-sexually—radically. The past seven years alone have marked a significant shift in communication where spoken words have been steadily replaced with brief, quick lines of text (Turkle 2014, Vanderbilt, Wayne). Less and less people use their phones to talk, whether they consider it cumbersome (Vanderbilt) or even excruciating (Wayne)⁷³. Regardless of complexity, all of these communication and simulation technologies are already leading us into the same problematic direction Gorodischer envisions: less contact.

Replacing actual human contact—whether physical or simply verbal—with technological proxies or substitutes can in fact be dangerous. Turkle believes these practices, in all their convenience, can and do cause problems in the long term. They do so both in how people relate to one another and their capacity for self-reflection. The customizable, editable interactions Las Mil have with their virtual lovers are precisely the kind of interactions Turkle identifies as the preferred ones today:

Technology appeals to us most where we are most vulnerable. And we are vulnerable. We're lonely, but we're afraid of intimacy. And so from social networks to sociable robots, we're designing technologies that will give us the

⁷³ Vanderbilt concludes that “In an increasingly data-rich, time-starved environment, the phone call can seem less a welcome invitation to connect than a disruptive, troubling analog experience” (53). Wayne attests to the purported obsolescence of phone calls by casually mentioning that accidentally removing the “phone” icon from his iPhone screen went unnoticed for him. Additionally, writer Domenica Ruta expresses that she has no trouble writing emails or texts, but “to actually speak with [her] voice and the wind inside of [herself] going through the reeds of [her] throat, [she]’ll feel like [she’s] choking to death” (Wayne).

illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship. We turn to technology to help us feel connected in ways we can comfortably control. But we're not so comfortable. We are not so much in control. ("Connected, but Alone?"')

In "A la luz...", Las Mil sentence Trafalgar to death for transgressing their systematically isolated and controlled virtual romance environment. Will we, one day, live in a society as segregated, isolated, and terrified of human contact as Veroboar? To critics like Turkle, this is a distinct possibility. Escapism may be the bread and butter of science fiction universally, but Gorodischer makes it clear, amidst jokes about sleazy salesmen and angry women, that avoiding reality and each other may not be the best course of action for humankind, a thought that, decades and a myriad technological advances later, researchers begin to echo: "our fantasies of substitution have cost us. Now we all need to focus on the many, many ways technology can lead us back to our real lives, our own bodies, our own communities, our own politics, our own planet. They need us" (Turtle 2014).

Despite its lighthearted style, Gorodischer's story conveys serious ideas and critiques that still ring true. Gender and its performance are fluid, and can vary and reconfigure themselves from one group to the next, just as the masculinities of Drenakuta V, Anandaha-A, and those of Earth are embodied in radically different ways. Nevertheless, sexual objectification continues to exist in Gorodischer's futuristic universe, even in non-heteronormative characters such as Trafalgar. "A la luz..." reinforces the notion that power corrupts, both when it is possessed and when it is coveted, and physical beauty can be an even more effective type of capital than money in

the quest for said power. Who is to say the beauty and sex appeal that sell products, put viewers in front of big and small screens, and persuade masses to undergo costly surgeries and treatments today won't be the driving force behind economies and governments tomorrow? Finally, Gorodischer foresees technology's potential for creating permanent, dangerous rifts among people, both at the individual and societal level. Replacing human companionship with machines does not require high-tech devices, such as the virtual reality machines Las Mil possessed. Instead, household technologies such as USB-powered attachments, smart phones, and even social media are already steering us in an anti-social direction. When comparing Gorodischer's 1970's fiction to present-day reality, a significant idea becomes evident: perhaps robots do not need to be indistinguishable from humans in order to replace them, machines simply need to change the way people feel about their own humanity. Having greater control over all aspects of human experience (or the illusion thereof) appears to be a good enough tradeoff for the advancement and longevity of the species.

Chapter Conclusion

Unlike the sexy, Europeanized fembots studied in Chapter 2, whose characterization was rather uniform across authors, non-female robot characters in Latin American science fiction are depicted in more varied ways. Gentle, celibate male robots like Cádiz Ávila's Bil Tu coexist with virile, sexually-ambitious androids, such as Muñoz Valenzuela's Tom, within the same genre. Some posthuman creations, like Gorodischer's virtual reality sex partners, can vary in looks and gender depending on characters' preferences. Meanwhile, certain anthropomorphized machines, like the industrial robot in "Juana y la cibernética," escape gendering and remain ambiguous, yet cannot escape sex.

None of these posthuman characters can. Once again, sexualities and (sometimes) gender are inextricably linked to robot figures and permeate their interactions with their human counterparts in these Latin American science fiction narratives. However, these expressions of gender and sexualities have a wider range than in previously-studied texts.

Latin American male authors are no longer alone in writing about ideal robotic partners who surpass human significant others in looks and temperament. Ilda Cádiz Ávila's "Bil Tu" features her own version of a *Stepford* husband, but the robot is not excessively sexualized or fetishized as in analog narratives like "Minerva." Female characters do, however, partake in the customization of posthuman entities for their own satisfaction, as it is the case for An in Cádiz Ávila's text and Las Mil in Gorodischer's. The male gaze that was ubiquitous in Araya and Guzmán Wolffer is absent in certain authors and present in others, sometimes unexpectedly. Angélica Gorodischer integrates it into her text seamlessly, giving her male protagonist a believable tone and persona without compromising the feminist subtext in "A la luz de la casta luna electrónica."

Male gazing abounds in *Flores para un cyborg* although, unlike in Araya's and Guzmán Wolffer's works, it is never aimed at the robot protagonist. Instead, it saturates the descriptions and construction of most (human) female characters—except perhaps for Rubén's elderly mother. Explicit sexuality is no longer exclusive to male posthuman science fiction authors in Latin America either. It is richly and intensely depicted by authors like Elena Aldunate and Angélica Gorodischer with an emphasis on female sexual pleasure, a theme that was absent in most texts from Chapter 2. Additionally, although certain elements such as sexual objectification of (female) robot characters and emphasis on female experience of pleasure appear to be patterns dependent on the gender

of authors, this is not always the case with all Latin American science fiction. Diego Muñoz Valenzuela, for example, features a male robot in his novel, characterized as highly sexual yet never as sexually objectified. Similarly, women in Angélica Gorodischer's story are literally in control of their sexual experiences—they do use a control panel to design their partners and stimuli—but their pleasure is somewhat glossed over, not to mention that they are presented as villains instead of heroines.

In Chapter 2, I proposed that the intensity of gender and sexuality in robots served as a measurement of posthuman characters' humanness. This appeared to be a distinctly Latin American addition to posthuman science fiction despite the indisputable presence of gendered and sexualized machines in the genre worldwide. In a vast number of international science fiction texts and visual media, the sexuality of androids and cyborgs generally takes a backseat to posthuman subjects' ability to experience memories and emotions—the canon measurement of humanness in cybernetic characters. In contrast, in texts such as “Minerva,” *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros* and *Flores para un cyborg* gender and sexuality are overtly correlated to robot's humanness. After studying additional Latin American science fiction texts such as “Bil Tu” and “Juana y la cibernética,” one additional measure of machines' humanness becomes all too evident: transference. “The perception of life in a humanoid robot is likely to depend partly on the emotional attitude of the user” (Levy 121), which is exactly the case for characters like An and Juana. These protagonists' projection of pent-up feelings onto robots makes them desire machines and believe that they are alive and self-aware when, in fact, they are presented as simple automatons to the reader. While mainstream successes like *Blade Runner* and the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* franchises envision a future where robots will be

subjective, autonomous beings comparable to humans, more modest texts such as Cádiz Ávila's and Aldunate's offer a contrastingly realistic perspective on the limits of posthumanism: Perhaps machines will never be "human," but we will start seeing our own humanity in them⁷⁴.

Finally, some considerations on race are in order. The cybernetic entities we encountered in this chapter mark a departure from the Europeanized bombshell paradigm prevalent in Chapter 2. The robots in Cádiz Ávila's and Muñoz Valenzuela's texts are closer to what could be a posthuman mestizo, but their succinct, one-size-fits-all depictions make both characters seem rather generic—a mildly handsome, tanned, dark haired man could represent a wide range of ethnic groups. Aldunate's machine is completely metallic and not humanoid in shape, eliminating race from the discussion. Gorodischer's machines can produce holographic lovers of any kind, but the potential to produce a novel configuration of gender, race, and posthumanism is wasted upon creating a facsimile of Lee Falk's character Mandrake the Magician, an established WASP comic book hero. Significantly, indigenous and black posthuman bodies continue to be missing from the picture. For no compelling reason, non-whiteness and technology appear to be mutually exclusive in these texts. However, is this exclusive of Latin American science fiction? González identifies this trend in English-language and Asian science fiction as well:

⁷⁴ This notion goes beyond science fiction and has been studied scientifically over the past two decades. A notable example is the CASA (Computers as Social Actors) paradigm, formulated by Nass et. Al after a series of experiments between human subjects and non-anthropomorphized computers. This paradigm posits that "social responses to computers are not the result of conscious beliefs that computers are human or human-like. Moreover, such behaviors do not result from users' ignorance or from psychological or social dysfunctions, nor from a belief that subjects are interacting with programmers. Rather, social responses to computers are commonplace and easy to generate" (72).

From my encounter with the world of cyborgs, and any cyberspace that these bodies may inhabit, I have seen that the question of race is decidedly fraught. Some see cyborgs and cyberspace as a convenient site for the erasure of questions of racial identity—if signs of difference divide us, the logic goes, then the lack of these signs might create a utopian social-scape of equal representation. However, the problem with this kind of e-race-sure is that it assumes differences between individuals or groups to be primarily superficial—literally skin deep. It also assumes that the status quo is an adequate form of representation. (González 71)

Posthuman science fiction, both in Latin America and beyond, should therefore ask not only what can be accomplished by representing new forms of embodiment, but also what will be lost by erasing socio-historically charged marks of difference, such as race.

The discussion on posthuman gender and sexualities in Latin American science fiction is far from over. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 have covered several key issues and laid foundations for further study in this area. However, we will not delve any deeper into the gender and sexualities implications of more recent posthuman Latin American scifi texts, which are presently beyond the scope of this dissertation—a study on posthuman gender in the Internet age would call for a whole dissertation of its own. Instead, it may be more imperative to examine the socio-political and historical contexts of some of this genre's texts in order to understand how, in addition to gender, cultural issues help characterize robots and cyborgs in Latin American science fiction. The next chapter will focus on socio-political matters in select posthuman scifi texts from Chile and Mexico. Despite covering only a small selection of works with these themes, Chapter 4 aims to contribute new insights to already-existing scholarship on this area by exploring alternate readings

of posthumanism in relation to totalitarian trauma, ecological decline, inter-religious conflict, and the interplay between capitalism, surveillance, and State/corporate control over citizens.

Chapter 4: Social Cyborgs and Cyborg Societies

“Technology is power in many societies, a greater power in many domains than the political system itself”
(Andrew Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*)

“El DF es quizá la urbe más gandalla de todo el mundo, al menos de este lado del planeta”
(BEF, *Ciudad interfase*)

Thus far, this exploration of Latin American posthuman science fiction has delved into fascinating, diverse representations and configurations of gender and sexualities in cybernetic entities present in select Mexican, Argentinean, and Chilean narratives. However, any study of posthumanism in these and similar science fiction texts would be incomplete without taking into consideration the social and historical contexts in which these works were written. After all, as Molina-Gavilán asserts, “La ciencia ficción, tal vez más que cualquier otro género, resulta ser un vehículo idóneo para la transmisión, velada o no, de mensajes de carácter político-social, bien en contra o a favor del sistema imperante en una época histórica determinada” (145). This has certainly been the case with many Latin American cultural products put forth during and after the installment of dictatorial regimes in various parts of the region through the course of the 20th century.

Many scholars have already studied at length the portrayal of and reflections on dictatorship trauma and historical memory in Latin American posthumanism (J. Andrew Brown’s *Cyborgs in Latin America* comes to mind). For this reason, I will discuss dictatorship issues and memory only in passing in this chapter, aiming to contribute with new insights and alternative readings rather than repeating what has already been said quite well by others. Conversely, this chapter’s wider focus will be on the confluence of technology, capitalism, surveillance (both from the State and privately owned entities), environmental decline, religion, and social participation/apathy as expressed through posthumanism.

With the exception of Chilean Diego Muñoz Valenzuela's *Flores para un cyborg*, all of the texts studied in this final chapter were written by Mexican authors in the 1990s. The temporal and national proximity of these works is evident in their thematic similarities. They feature futuristic cyberpunk versions of Mexico City, imagining the city plagued by endless storefronts, television screens, and advertisements, complete with a multitude of homeless people sleeping in hollow areas below the ubiquitous commercial districts. Others envision Mexico DF as a radioactive hell, where insect-distilled liquor is cheaper and more available than water and robots walk the streets indistinguishably from humans.

According to these narratives, permanent surveillance is a given for Mexico in the future. In some versions the State keeps citizens in line through home-monitoring systems and tracking satellites, while others place surveillance at the hands of broadcast corporations, turning private and critical moments into commodities. All in all, a definite sense of despair and cynicism prevails in all of these texts. The inclusion of cybernetic entities and posthumanizing procedures helps underscore the direness of the environment (ecologically, sociopolitically, and culturally), with robots and cyborgs embodying hope, ruin, or indifference. Moreover, these texts display an underlying theme: the marriage of technology and capitalism may become—or may already be—more fearsome than the State itself.

The chapter closes with a story by Jorge Cubría that, unlike the rest of the works studied in this dissertation, features the internet and network technologies as key elements. The text serves as a point of connection between my study and the post-1999 Latin American science fiction works I hope to cover in future research projects. Albeit

brief, Cubría's story offers a glimpse into the democratizing power of the internet and network technologies' potential to give disenfranchised voices the opportunity to be heard.

Taking Justice Into Your Own Robotic Hands: *Flores para un cyborg*

Unsurprisingly and rather often, science fiction in Latin America has served as a vehicle for the examination, questioning, and criticism of authoritarian regimes. The fantastic character of these texts makes them ideal vessels for sociopolitical messages, for it provides an additional layer against censorship. Their themes and plots often seem too implausible to be serious, or else create the impression that they are meant for non-politically engaged audiences, such as children (Molina-Gavilán 145). Muñoz Valenzuela's *Flores para un cyborg* (1997) takes advantage of this feature in order to offer extensive criticism of (post)authoritarianism in Chile. His strategy is effective: despite being very politically charged and receiving awards within its genre, the novel has not attracted significant attention outside the Chilean science fiction circle (Vega 12, Rojas Gómez).

As a novel penned and published after the Pinochet era and amidst Chile's transition to democracy, *Flores para un cyborg* did not encounter the kind of censorship Molina-Gavilán observes in the reception of Hispanic science fiction produced during dictatorships⁷⁵. Muñoz Valenzuela is but one among many authors who have recurred to science fictional scenarios in order to expose post-dictatorial critiques and discontents. Renowned studies on (post)dictatorial trauma and memory in posthuman science fiction

⁷⁵ The novel's criticisms are generally overt, with only name changes for notorious members of Pinochet's military junta and a few action-movie-flavored historical tweaks to make the plot more intense.

like J. Andrew Brown's work on the connections between Latin American regimes, transition, and cyborgian science fiction, is worth mentioning. Brown finds a direct reflection of state-sponsored torture and brutality in posthuman bodies' hybridity, fragmentation, and the inherently violent character of human to cyborg transformations (4). Additionally, Brown interprets certain cybernetic bodies in Latin American literature, film, and advertising as physical representations of power hierarchies, and traces a definite link between posthuman, digital entities and the preservation of historical memory (Brown 4-5). While comprehensive and compelling, Brown's study leaves out works like Muñoz Valenzuela's, whose approach to historical trauma and memory in posthumanism is somewhat different. Considering the extent of Brown and others' insights on science fiction and historical memory in Latin America, my readings will deal with this topic rather succinctly. They will highlight aspects of *Flores para un cyborg* which studies like Brown's may have overlooked. I hope to call attention, in particular, to the novel's use of posthumanism to emphasize mental and ideological rather than physical trauma—and the resulting desire for reparations—from State-sponsored abuse. I will also study Muñoz Valenzuela's brief but noteworthy exploration of Latin American exile in the United States.

Flores para un cyborg overlaps with some of Brown's readings in its critique of Latin American neoliberalism. However, Muñoz Valenzuela's novel does not denounce neoliberalism at large, but rather focuses on the emergence and support of such economic trends in Chile under and after Pinochet. The novel's biggest gripe against neoliberalism the involvement of ex-regime officials in large business ventures, their success in them, and the coupling of their financial prosperity with the impunity they gained from the

1978 amnesty law. The text references the latter overtly, with clear diatribes against those in power during the military rule⁷⁶: “Sí, claro, la amnistía esa de los hijos de puta. Sueltan media docena de presos y limpian el currículum de un ejército completo de asesinos... y más encima les dejan intacto su poder económico: Las empresas, las armas, los depósitos secretos, las casas clandestinas, todo” (Muñoz Valenzuela 91). Posthumanism in Muñoz Valenzuela also operates differently from that identified by Brown. Dictatorial trauma is not expressed through physical scars, ailments, or fragmented, techno-hybrid bodies. Instead, cybernetics—embodied in the robot co-protagonist, Tom—expresses dictatorial trauma in a largely ideological manner.

Muñoz Valenzuela’s robot is created, above all, in response to the anger and disillusionment that the protagonist/narrator, a fully human Chilean roboticist named Rubén Arancibia, experiences regarding Chile’s sociopolitical state during its transition to democracy. All throughout, Rubén voices his discontent with the transition, underscoring his distrust in a democracy and national economy sustained by those involved in the regime and their new business ventures⁷⁷:

La amnistía no se hizo para liberar a los presos de conciencia, sino para dejar en libertad de acción a los gorilas de la ex-Central de Informaciones, agrupados en

⁷⁶ Various characters in *Flores para un cyborg*, including Rubén, Rubén’s father and Tom the robot, use expletives often when referring to members of the regime: “hijos de puta” (11), “los cabrones de siempre” (11), “el nuevo sátrapa” (9), “ese hijo de puta” (57), “es usted una mierda” (48), etc.

⁷⁷ According to Pinedo, this perspective was one of two main social attitudes that emerged in Chile during the transition period (124). On the one hand, there were many enthusiastic supporters of the transition’s move toward democracy and neoliberalism. On the other hand, mirroring the views in *Flores para un cyborg*, there were those who “se sentían decepcionados pues esperaban más participación social y más juicios a los militares (incluido Pinochet), y menos mercado, menos competitividad social, y una economía que no estuviera en las manos de los que antes, durante y después de la dictadura habían manejado las ganancias del país” (Pinedo 125).

pequeñas empresas similares a la de los finados Torres y Garcés: seguridad, importaciones, detectives privados, seguros, alarmas contra robos (86).

Garcés llegó a convertirse en el secretario personal de Torres en la Central de Informaciones. Ahora era propietario de una empresa de importaciones, además de otras inversiones, la misma rutina de varios agentes retirados del negocio sucio del soplónaje y la tortura (64)

Similarly, Rubén and his allies have lost all hope in the State's ability to bring dictatorial crimes to justice, expressing evident disdain for the "borrón y cuenta nueva" mentality of their country's new political order⁷⁸. The views in Muñoz Valenzuela's novel are certainly not an anomaly in postdictatorial Chile. Nelly Richard, for example, introduces the essay collection *Pensar en/la postdictadura* by interrogating the validity of that very term and the period it names:

la palabra 'postdictadura' (la parte resentida de ella que no logra disolver lo cortante de su prefijo) retiene el eco de una nominalidad sombría que nos recuerda la opacidad conflictiva, el atormentado residuo que el dispositivo simbólico (y también lexical) de la 'transición' quiso borrar para que no echara a perder la lisura y transparencia de los nuevos signos de la democracia neoliberal" (Richard 10)

⁷⁸ "El coronel Velasco, después de un par de meses en el poder, no había dado señas de tener un interés sustancial por aplicar la justicia en casos como el de Guillermo. Eso era cuestión del pasado, borrón y cuenta nueva" (45). En cuanto a borrón y cuenta nueva, le diré que no me gusta la idea. No me hago ilusiones tampoco. Hasta ahora no sé que el coronel Velasco haya tramitado la extradición del Generalísimo ni que haya llevado a juicio siquiera a uno de los torturadores de uniforme que todo el mundo sabe quiénes son..." (47). "¿Dárselas a ese hijo de puta? ¡Claro! Pero es muy difícil. Ningún tribunal lo condenaría. No conseguiríamos nada con esos magistrados corruptos o, en el mejor de los casos, inertes." (57)

All throughout *Flores*, Rubén and his allies seek ways to disrupt and destroy this “lisura and transparencia” in order to bring justice to their fallen comrades and all those who were abused and murdered under the regime. Thus, Tom the android is designed to be their most invaluable asset for espionage, infiltration, and murder of several elite members of the dictatorial regime that walked away without answering for their economic and human rights crimes during the military rule. The robot’s ability to extract and store digital information with ease, his capacity to mimic specific individual’s speech and gestures, the superhuman force provided by his alloy skeleton, and his cybernetic body’s potential for external modification (including face-swapping), allow him to impersonate and confuse his group’s ex-regime targets, leading ultimately to the latter’s demise and the confiscation of their monetary goods. Rubén and his allies then use these funds to build an underground base/robotics laboratory where they can meet in secrecy and perform further modifications and upgrades to the robot (Muñoz Valenzuela 121).

Tom, however, is not a passive tool for revenge. In fact, the idea to murder former regime members who tortured and killed civilians (including some of Rubén’s closest friends) comes directly from Tom. For example, the robot convinces Rubén and Ricardo, his best friend, to take direct action against ex-general Roberto Torres and Manuel Garcés,⁷⁹ his right-hand man. Without consulting with any human characters, Tom takes it upon himself to study Garcés’ background and mannerisms in order to impersonate

⁷⁹ These, as well as all other names associated with members of the regime in *Flores para un cyborg*, are completely fabricated. Chile’s dictatorial history, too, is modified in the novel and features two back-to-back regimes said to have been equally bloody (Muñoz Valenzuela 9, 10). The name Pinochet is completely absent as well, but there are constant references to a “Generalísimo” who retired to the Canary Islands in complete impunity (43, 47).

him. After changing his own face for a copy of Garcés', Tom visits Torres, extracts important information from him, takes all the money in the former general's safe, and kills him with a gunshot to the head. It is worth noting that Tom uses his own cybernetic condition as an intimidation tool: "Mira—dijo Tom y abrió su camisa oprimiendo el botón secreto que abrió su carne para dar paso a una masa de luces y circuitos centelleantes—¿Ahora me crees? Contesta o te mataré" (Muñoz Valenzuela 72). The android's strategy is extremely effective. It sends Torres into a panic and makes him comply with Tom's every demand. Once the public hears of Torres' death at the hands of the false Manuel Garcés, Torres' men go after the real Garcés and kill him, just as Tom had planned from the start. The robot's strategy is fueled by sentiments that mirror those of his builder, as expressed in Tom's version of the events: "[Torres] iba a morir para pagar en parte por sus crímenes. Y así fue" (Muñoz Valenzuela 73).

In this sense, Tom the robot is not an embodied memorial of authoritarian trauma and state-sponsored abuse, like the cyborgs in Brown's study. After all, Tom entered the country once the Generalísimo's rule had ended and a new democratic period had begun. His cybernetic body was not abused, nor was he created to heal or nurse physical wounds from the regime's torture—including Rubén's⁸⁰. Instead, Tom is a posthuman, super-human agent for political revenge and, thus, historical catharsis. While Rubén spends most of the novel philosophizing about the stagnant transition in his country and harboring resentment toward the regime, it is Tom who takes the initiative and takes

⁸⁰ Before seeking exile in the United States through enrollment in a robotics Ph.D. program, Rubén was kidnapped and tortured in Chile: Parecía que siempre era de noche allá, botado boca abajo en el calabozo regado de miasmas, vomitando después de la tortura, gritando a los hijos de puta que vinieran de una maldita vez a buscarme con sus corvos, sus ametralladoras, sus ojos de buitres hambrientos. Y el final nunca llegaba en esa interminable noche del tiempo donde—dicen—sobreviví casi tres meses, que bien pudieron ser varios milenios" (Muñoz Valenzuela 11)

action to bring about the justice that, according to Rubén, the State will always ignore in favor of giving off the impression of a stable, developing nation that never had any problems. It would seem, then, that Rubén is “the brains” and Tom “the muscle,” but that action-movie binary falls apart when considering that Tom is, rather than Rubén’s pawn, a mastermind of his own. The android’s *raison d’être*, motivations, and actions are, therefore, unique to Chile’s (post)dictatorial situation, making Tom a robotic superhero-of-sorts from Chile and for Chile.

Before concluding this section, let us point out another noteworthy feature of *Flores para un cyborg*: its commentary on US interventionism in Latin America and the experience of dictatorial exile. The majority of Chapter 1, “Amigo para la distancia,” focuses upon Rubén’s experience as a refugee student in the United States, his interactions with US and Latin American exiled academics alike, and all the details behind Tom’s design and building process. The chapter ends with Rubén and his robot flying back to Chile for good, upon which the human protagonist remarks:

Nos embarcamos sin dificultades, y dejé—con una rara mezcla de gratitud y repugnancia—ese país que me había acogido en el destierro. Mal que mal, ellos mismos eran los instigadores de los dictadores que asolaban Latinoamérica, engrosando la deuda externa y las listas de desaparecidos, e invocando la defensa del mundo libre (Muñoz Valenzuela 37)

Clearly, the text portrays US interventionism in a less-than-favorable light. Nonetheless, the critiques of this phenomenon are few and slight compared to the constant, forceful scorns against Chile’s dictatorial regime—all names changed as a minor precaution—that pepper the novel. North American characters, however, are a mixed bag in Muñoz

Valenzuela's text. Some, such as professor Callahan, exhibit a well-intentioned—albeit oblivious—paternalism: “un científico de sólido prestigio, un humanista que había acogido durante su rectoría a numerosos perseguidos políticos latinoamericanos” (Muñoz Valenzuela 13). Others, such as professor Johnson—whom Rubén prefers to call “el reptil”—embody greed and, perhaps not coincidentally, use their (Latin American) students work and research for their own gain.

Chapter 1 of *Flores para un cyborg* also explores the experience of U.S. Latinos and Latin Americans, albeit not too deeply. As mentioned in our Chapter 3 of this dissertation, Rubén and Tom become positive representations of Latin Americans in the US through their inversion of the “Latin lover” stereotype, a denomination that acquires a positive, empowering connotation in Muñoz Valenzuela's novel. A similar deconstruction appears in another tired U.S. Latino stereotype, the street thug/drug dealer. Tom obtains a fake passport to travel to Chile through two Hispanic drug dealers he had previously saved from murder: “un día regresaba tarde del laboratorio, para variar sustituyéndote, vi a unos tipos a punto de ejecutar a dos hispanos atados y amordazados. Un lío territorial de tráfico de drogas, me dijeron después. En ese momento no me interesó mucho, sólo quise salvarlos” (Muñoz Valenzuela 35). Despite Rubén's reprimands for his involvement in such a dangerous situation, Tom defends the Hispanic drug dealers: “ellos no son los principales culpables de nuestros males, Rubén, y tú lo sabes” (36). Tom and the dealers help one another, thus emphasizing the importance of support within the Hispanic community when facing issues unique to the U.S. context, such as criminal profiling and illegal residency.

There is little significant insight into US interventionism or U.S. Latino experiences beyond the first chapter of *Flores*. However, the inclusion of these issues in the novel does set Muñoz Valenzuela's text apart from similar posthuman narratives studied here. Despite featuring strong sociopolitical undertones, the latter do not engage with the complex historical dynamics between The U.S. and Latin America. The avoidance of this topic is especially noticeable in Mexican science fiction texts studied in upcoming sections of this chapter, such as Guzmán Wolffer's novel *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*, and the short stories "Pastillas de Felicidad" and "Ruido gris," by Jorge Cubría and Pepe Rojo, respectively. What these Mexican narratives and Muñoz Valenzuela's do have in common is an introspective approach toward sociopolitical intricacies and turmoil. While there may be external factors at play, ultimately, it is national elements—be it the State, economy, ecology, mass media, or citizens—that stand at the center of and are interrogated by these texts. This tendency to look (question, and blame) inwards may have some exceptions within Latin American science fiction. Yet, it is certainly prevalent in the primary texts considered in my study and, perhaps, a trait to distinguish science fiction from this region in particular apart from the international canon, where self-righteousness takes precedence over self-questioning and external rather than internal forces become the enemy.

Flores para un cyborg stands out among Chilean—and Latin American—posthuman science fiction not only for featuring a complex, unique robot character such as Tom, but also for the novel's distinctly Chilean character. This sets it apart from the more frequent escapist and fantastic tone of traditional science fiction works. This is evident in the novel's plot and character development, all of which connect and lead to

the end of impunity in postdictatorial Chile. This is visible as well in the spatial and temporal setting of *Flores*, which eschews the typical technology-ridden dystopias in favor of an imaginary Southern Cone where current tech and ingenuity produce convincing humanoid robots. By placing the narrative in a current national context, Muñoz Valenzuela conveys a desire for immediate action rather than leaving the country's future up to future generations, as can often be the case with science fiction.

It is worth noting, nonetheless, that *Flores para un cyborg* falls short of what it sets out to initially do. Rubén, Tom, Ricardo, Beatriz, Ximena, and the rest of their group retire peacefully—and abruptly—into marriage and family life after strategically killing select elites of the extant Generalísimo's regime and some splinter group heads. The text does not disclose whether the “heroes” actions effected any change—positive or negative—in their country at the social, political, or economic level. Instead, the novel closes with the cliché that power corrupts and revenge is a slippery slope:

Ajusticiar, Rubén, ajusticiar es la palabra, mal que nos pese. El hombre es un animal vengativo, ha venido haciendo lo mismo por milenios [...] pero comparto tu duda, no sé qué se obtiene por esa vía. Eliminas una sabandija que ya no te va a salir al camino. ¿Y las otras miles que pululan por ahí? Haces justicia por tu mano [...] Al fin y al cabo es el poder, el poder que corrompe, que transforma a los humanos en perros de presa que no trepidan en nada con tal de sentir que superan su transitoriedad, su existencia precaria” (Muñoz Valenzuela 204)

By the end of *Flores*, the focus has shifted from historical reparations and justice to individual, private pursuits of happiness. These include Rubén and Beatriz' parenthood

prospect and Tom's achievement of "manhood" through the addition of a cybernetic penile implant, not to mention the robot's romance with human researcher Paulina.

Inevitably, the novel's anticlimactic conclusion negates some of the text's initial spirit. Without citing reasons beyond not wanting to tempt fate any further, once justice-starved protagonists suddenly opt for social disengagement⁸¹. Such abrupt apathy is not completely out of line with Rubén and Tom's ideologies throughout the novel. As much as both characters disparage the State, the Generalísimo's era, and the transition, they are also disenchanted with the opposition. Rubén, for example, shuts down Ricardo's offer to join the *Partido del Pueblo* (the novel's main socialist group) because he does not trust them either: "Ustedes me simpatizan, pero no puedo aceptar su disciplina, ¿sabes? Creo en la imaginación, en la inteligencia, no en axiomas con pretensiones de objetividad. Para mí ese tiempo quedó en el pasado y eso es definitivo" (Muñoz Valenzuela 92). The strange ending of *Flores para un cyborg* may be another sign of the human protagonist's jadedness with Chile's politics. Whether or not Rubén and Tom made any difference in postdictatorial Chile, the cybernetic protagonist's interest in (rectifying) national history, his concern for fellow Latin Americans during his short stay in the United States, and his fearless stance against impunity still make him a valuable example of Latin American literary posthumanism. The "flores" in Muñoz Valenzuela's title have been rightfully earned.

⁸¹ Rubén, for example, expresses his future plans as follows: "Quisiera dedicarme a la investigación tranquilamente, disfrutar del tiempo libre con mi mujer, mis amigos, ver buenas películas y leer buenos libros. Creo que no es bueno abusar de la buena suerte que hemos tenido" (Muñoz Valenzuela 210).

The Circle of Despair: Environmental Apocalypse in *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*

As discussed in Chapter 2, Ricardo Guzmán Wolffer is a renowned Mexican science fiction author with a considerable number of publications in the scifi and horror genres and a style of his own that mixes elements from both in generally apocalyptic settings⁸². His novel *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros* is especially relevant to my reading: it features a major female posthuman character and treats gender and race in problematic ways. It also boasts a confusing, convoluted plot, and discernible stylistic problems that, notwithstanding, have not prevented the text from earning awards and recognition in the Mexican science fiction scene. Flawed as it may be, the novel is not entirely without merit. Its grim portrayal of urban and “natural”—though not rural—spaces and commentary on Mexican sociopolitical as well as ecological decline are, in fact, valuable. As accurately summarized by Andrea Bell, future visions of Mexico City by Guzmán Wolffer and similar cyberpunk authors from that country present “a nightmare of corruption, pollution, overpopulation, alienation, and violence” (443). In this particular version, the setting is the aftermath of a massive environmental disaster, a radioactive spill at the Laguna Verde Nuclear Power Plant⁸³. Mexico is so tainted with radioactivity it must be geographically sealed off. Humans and animals die and mutate en masse due to the chemically-altered environment. Resources run dry. Violence ensues from national panic and desperation. State corruption seems to be the only remaining

⁸² Guzmán Wolffer is considered “uno de los más prolíficos escritores mexicanos de ciencia ficción y fantasía, con cerca de 20 libros” (Paul). His work, defined as “una obra consolidada” is consistent in its use of apocalyptic themes, sordid spaces, marginal conducts, a hybrid use of science fiction and horror genres, and “un acercamiento—a la cómic—con respecto a la psicología tremendista de sus personajes” (Trujillo Muñoz 271).

⁸³ This nuclear plant was built between 1990 and 1995, and remains operational to this day in Veracruz.

constant in Guzmán-Wolffer's radioactive Mexican hellscape. That and a generalized sense of despair and apathy that only grow stronger with each subsequent mutation and crime.

Although the plot has little relation to ecological themes, and characters are inactive in restoring their decaying surroundings, an evident environmental concern infuses the description of spaces and world-building in *Que Dios se apiade*⁸⁴. Aside from superficial similarities to the highly urbanized, polluted scenery typical of canon cyberpunk texts, Guzmán Wolffer's narrative strays away from urban/natural binaries (stereo)typical of this genre. In doing so, the novel presents a contrasting perspective that not only sets it apart from similarly-themed canon Anglo texts, but also provides a necessary balance in the cyberpunk genre. In addition, an ecocritical reading of *Que Dios se apiade* provides significant clues on the symbiotic relationship between historical, economic, sociocultural, and environmental changes. This particular Mexican science fiction text reflects such interactions and frames these issues nationally by injecting social and ecological critiques with hopelessness toward both the Mexican government and the Mexican people.

Commonly, well-established cyberpunk narratives, such as William Gibson's *Neuromancer* series or Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner*, feature hyper-urbanized environments where naturally-occurring ecosystems and their comprising elements—animal and plant life, mineral resources—have been destroyed or have become extinct, only to be replaced by a plethora of technological objects and spaces (Leaver, Hughes

⁸⁴ Before introducing any characters or setting the plot in motion, the text's first focus is Mexico's environmental decline, as expressed in the novel's third sentence: "La contaminación crecía, como la población, para la que la mano del muerto y la ecología significaban lo mismo" (Guzmán Wolffer 7).

22). The extreme urbanization typical of modern scifi dystopias is certainly present in Guzmán Wolffer's novel. Future Mexico City is furnished with computer-guided aerial highways and unexpectedly low traffic, most of which comes from floating vehicles—affordable only to the wealthy (Guzmán Wolffer 12). The futuristic metropolis is teeming with tall buildings, many of which serve as extremely crowded housing projects with averages of fifteen to twenty two apartments per floor (13). After all, the already overpopulated D.F. now houses an additional few million refugees from the chemically-ravaged, uninhabitable rural areas they once occupied. Only one thing is missing in the mishmash of flying cars, skyscrapers, seedy storefronts, streets teeming with humans and robots, thick smog and tainted water: vegetation. The city is coated in (often greasy and sticky) concrete (Guzmán Wolffer 14); the few animals that remain are insects and the occasional sewer rat. This absence of natural resources and excess of urbanization and technology, a paramount trait of cyberpunk, signals despair over the loss of—and yearning for—nature (Leaver), a metaphor for apocalypse (Mikryukova 8), and multiple angles on control of all aspects of life through technological progress (Mikryukova 9, Hughes 25).

Such critical perspectives tend to reduce the role of ecology in science fiction to expected binaries, such as environment vs. technological progress: the tools humankind creates for its own advancement are at odds with non-human life forms and natural resources—especially those not yet domesticated, controlled, or catalogued. Earlier scifi and fantasy narratives—particularly those prior to the industrial revolution and 20th Century World Wars—are interpreted typically as tales of technological (read “human”) triumph over the indomitable forces of nature, thus messaging humankind's potential to

conquer chaos and the unknown through progress and social order (Mikryukova 8-9). Conversely, critics of contemporary science fiction often identify themes of regret over the future destruction of natural resources and despair at the homogenization and identity loss in worlds completely shaped and ruled by man-made devices and structures—both physical and social (Hughes 25, 26). In either case, and whether technology is the good guy or vice versa, nature and progress continue to be seen as antagonists, as if they were, inevitably, mutually exclusive.

Que Dios se apiade, however, destabilizes this binary by emphasizing complex, contradictory aspects of both technology and ecology. Guzmán Wolffer especially challenges the conflation of technology with control/homogenization. On the one hand, his vision of a future Mexico City is governed by an extensive bureaucratic body comprised of humans and robots dedicated to ensuring maximum social order. The latter is particularly emphasized in the electronic system the State uses in order to monitor and control every pregnancy and birth in the country to guarantee citizenship and a radioactivity-free population—any embryos, fetuses, or newborns with the smallest trace of radioactivity are immediately discarded by State medics⁸⁵. The computerized highways and flying cars, adopted to improve the city air and reduce traffic problems, are in fact doing so (Guzmán Wolffer 12). Drug trafficking and its resulting violence are a thing of the past due to legalization and regulation of narcotics (8). The city is nearly overrun by buildings, but everyone seems to have a home.

⁸⁵ “Cuando un parto estaba por llegar, los médicos revisaban minuciosamente a la madre y al chamaco. En caso de que el producto final presentara señales de deformaciones, aun sólo probables, también se iba al caño. Por el contrario, si aprobaba los exámenes papá Gobierno corría con todos los cuidados para un feliz parto” (Guzmán Wolffer 9).

On the other hand, this portrait of apparent social order and technological ease of control soon becomes shattered by chaotic descriptions of the city, its people, and the inner workings of Mexican bureaucracy. Even with roofs on their heads, the non-wealthy—a staggering majority—live in overcrowded environments while many more resort to now-legal drug (ab)use in the face of despair and social apathy (13). Those very drugs are the result of technological engineering. Despite its intricacy, the bureaucratic system in place is corrupt and abusive, traits that are embodied by characters such as Pérez Grieg (the State official who assigns Lupus, the protagonist, the police investigation at the heart of the novel)⁸⁶. Moreover, the technology used to contain the Laguna Verde spill consists of a dense, impenetrable wall approximately one kilometer deep and one kilometer tall. The wall extends over thousands of kilometers, surrounding and sealing off Mexico completely and permanently.

Although mentioned only a few times in *Que Dios se apiade*, this wall is especially symbolic. It is an object of great fear among the population: everything contained within its depths is extremely poisonous, approaching the area causes cancer, and its ions melt human skin (13). Evidently, this wall is a direct nod to the conflictive US-Mexico border discourse and policy. While Guzmán Wolffer does not delve too deeply into the matter, the text exaggerates and mocks the idea of Mexico as undesirable to its northern neighbor. The latter has not only closed its doors to Mexico altogether, but it also meddles in its waning trade system:

⁸⁶ Pérez Grieg is characterized as an overconfident, yet incompetent bureaucrat with extremely poor work ethic, a taste for prohibitively priced liquor and embezzlement, and a history of robot worker abuse. Lupus keeps Pérez Grieg in check by threatening to publicize the bureaucrat's excesses and violent behavior at the workplace.

Con el pretexto de que el mundo no podía ser contaminado con la radiación mexicana, los norteamericanos tenían instalados una serie de dispositivos de seguridad para revisar lo que recibíamos. Mucho se discutió sobre el hecho de que las distintas potencias nos utilizaban como conejillos de Indias. Vaya novedad (23).

It is worth noting that, aside from these remarks, the U.S. and Mexico's problematic relationship does not play a major part in Guzmán Wolffer's novel. In fact, the text engages primarily with Mexico's own social, political, and, especially, environmental decline without much regard for foreign affairs. The novel quickly moves away from border politics and frames the wall's importance within an exclusively national context by emphasizing the significant economic and social strife that this sealing structure generates, especially in terms of food and drink sources⁸⁷. While fresh food and clean water are practically gone now, the state continues importing and implementing foreign technology (Guzmán Wolffer 23). Most of these gadgets and robots are for State use, thus implying that the government's needs prime over the Mexican people's well-being.

It is obvious, then, that despite the highly urban and technologized setting of *Que Dios se apiade*, signs of the rigorous sociopolitical order or social homogenization critics identify in canon science fiction and cyberpunk texts are absent here. Such visions of imposed peace, comfort, and equality in highly technologized, completely standardized societies⁸⁸ are often viewed suspiciously by scholars and authors alike. Huxley, for

⁸⁷ The depletion of food and water sources is so severe that an illicit food trafficking business arises, is eventually taken down by the authorities, and citizens are finally left with mostly insects, mice, and (algae and insect based) alcohol as their available nutritional and hydration options (Guzmán Wolffer 8, 34, 100).

⁸⁸ These are exemplified in a number of well-known literary and visual scifi works from *Brave New World*, Huxley's dystopian take on utopia, to every *Star Trek* series, where humanity has finally achieved long-lasting peace through equal education, economic, and employment opportunities for all citizens.

example, opens *Brave New World* with a warning against utopias in the form of an epigraph. Hughes echoes many in his reading of the film *Silent Running* (1972); he asserts that “comfort and ease, the usual goals of human civilization, are actually anodyne, and that without the pain and randomness provided by human encounters with the ‘other’ of the natural world, human beings will lose their individuality and be unable to live fulfilling lives” (26). These narratives yearn for less order, less sameness, and a return to the struggle that (supposedly) makes humankind human.

Herein lies the importance of *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*. Guzmán Wolffer’s novel contradicts the idea that significant urbanization, generalized order, and lack of struggle are inherent threats to human individuality. Particularly in its descriptions of spaces and background characters (average citizens), the novel demonstrates that facing inequality, strife, and the supposed character-building that come from these trials does not guarantee fulfillment or individuality. The characters in *Que Dios se apiade* are, in fact, struggling against *random, painful* nature—what Hughes prescribes—without benefitting from it. Granted, randomness and pain here come from radioactively modified nature; at the end of the day, however, water, animal infestations, and air are major contributors to the hunger, illnesses, overcrowding, societal despair, and stress-induced crime and drug use in Guzmán Wolffer’s cyberpunk metropolis.

It seems facile for writers and readers unfamiliar with such pain and struggle to idealize a life *free* from privileges and (often taken-for-granted) access to basic resources enjoyed in the developed world. This is not to say that literary works based on this premise are devoid of value. In fact, questioning the damage humankind could inflict upon itself by living only in enjoyment and pleasure is as important as this potential

future is likely for certain parts of the world⁸⁹. And yet, it also seems imperative to consider the alternative: are struggle, pain, and social “non-sameness” actually necessary or helpful? Moreover, is fear of social homogeneity a fear of cultural erasure or, actually, fear of social equality⁹⁰? To answer these and further questions, we need the inclusion of narratives from places other than the comfortable, developed homelands of canon science fiction and cyberpunk. Texts like *Que Dios se apiade* and similar Mexican and Latin American works provide a necessary counterbalance to Anglo utopian and dystopian narratives that disparage development and idealize pain. The former can remind audiences that the latter are, in the end, extrapolations and idealizations, and that an Anglo concept of rewards for every struggle does not hold true every time or everywhere.

Despite the dark urban setting in *Que Dios se apiade*, an ecological vein runs through it. This environmental theme tends to shy away from the spotlight, merely providing a backdrop for often unrelated, testosterone-driven, comic-book inspired plotlines and character constructions—which were sufficiently discussed in Chapter 2. However, the ecological undertones of Guzmán Wolffer’s novel are worth considering. The novel’s environmental situation is an exaggerated foresight of what may come if Mexico does not address contemporary ecological issues. Environmental decline in *Que Dios se apiade* appears as a consequence of socio-historical events and, more importantly, the entire country’s neglect and apathy. This marks another departure from mainstream science fiction, where ecological disasters and destruction are usually

⁸⁹ I consider this discussion very important, and will delve into it more deeply in upcoming sections of this chapter.

⁹⁰ The semantic differences between “same” and “equal” seem to escape or confuse some after all.

attributed to a single party, be it greedy governments, irresponsible corporations, mad scientists, super villains, alien attacks, or fate itself.

While ecological change, in all its ebbs and flows, does not occur in a vacuum, it is nevertheless influenced—negligibly or considerably—by the social evolution of humankind and the institution of hierarchies and sociopolitical systems (Bookchin 22, Zimmerman 2). Environmental damage and decline, in particular, can be explained as “the outcome not of a generalized anthropocentrism, but rather as the result of authoritarian structures, embodied most perniciously in capitalism but also present in state socialism” (Zimmerman 2). In *Que Dios se apiade*, the State’s incompetence is likely responsible for the Laguna Verde spill and following radioactive apocalypse—after all, the nuclear plant is owned and operated by the Comisión Federal de Electricidad, a Mexican government agency. Guzmán Wolffer does not paint a kind picture of Mexican bureaucracy either. The novel constantly mocks their lack of interest in decontaminating Mexico beyond simply screening unborn children for radioactivity and providing a cleaner transportation system.

Although the State is clearly responsible for a great deal of the environmental damage in the novel, citizens also share the blame. Even when radioactive contamination is the underlying cause of every other problem in *Que Dios se apiade*, none of the characters, interweaving storylines, or reflections in the novel seek solutions to the obvious ecological crisis. Lupus and Leticia/Magnolia’s main quest is to destroy a black magic sect that has been sacrificing children to open time portals, without any attention to environmental issues. The sect itself, founded by citizens worried initially about a potential ecological apocalypse, turns out to be a group of greedy individuals who only

wanted to visit other time periods for their own gain—often financial⁹¹. None of the supporting characters express overt concerns over the appalling environmental situation in their world, and the general population remains in a state of despair and escapism in the form of constant drug use and frequent orgies—activities for which there are many official establishments around the city. Such character attitudes are logical when considering the setting of *Que Dios se apiade*. Guzmán Wolffer emphasizes the direness of his future world by peppering his novel with grotesque descriptions of filth, deformities, plagues (both animal and medical), and an overuse of the term “dantesco,” thus suggesting that his dystopian Mexico is akin to Dante’s *Inferno*. However, it is worth noting that citizens never protest or retaliate against the State, or against former foreign allies that reneged on Mexico, capitalist enterprises, or any other possible entities accountable for the nightmare they are living. Guzmán Wolffer depicts a defeated, hopeless Mexican nation that would rather let the country rot—literally and figuratively—than try to solve its problems. A lackluster government and social apathy are killing the environment along with the spill’s radioactivity. This disconcerting, yet fitting conclusion further underscores the impact of social/ political action and neglect upon the environment, a more complex, sensitive, and human-conditioned and dependent system than the so-called indomitable force it appears to be in countless science fiction texts.

⁹¹ The sect’s leader and main villain, Milton Rose, uses his time-traveling experiences to accumulate money throughout history (Guzmán Wolffer 69, 81, 87, 97), while another member known only as “el gordo” travels to the past to fulfill his own fantasies, such as speaking with Jesus in person (75). None of the actions of the black magic sect members reflect their supposed mission statement: “unos cinco o diez años antes de la catástrofe, se fundó una secta aquí en México que hablaba de la destrucción del mundo [...] intentaron hablar con las autoridades y la ciudadanía para solucionar los problemas ambientales, ante la indiferencia decidieron salvarse solos” (Guzmán Wolffer 64)

Before concluding this section, let us broach a brief comment on the sociopolitical and environmental role of robots in *Que Dios se apiade*. The female protagonist is, in fact, a completely cybernetic being, yet her portrayal and actions are generally unrelated to the novel's sociopolitical or ecological themes. Leticia/Magnolia's role as a State-assigned (and purchased) agent, is the closest the text gets to using her character as a commentary on these matters. Moreover, the novel's strong ecological critique is seldom linked to Leticia/Magnolia, who—as discussed in Chapter 2—has, above all, a scopophilic role. Indeed, the text does not focus on any other individual robot characters, except for one of Pérez Grieg's assistants, whose head is destroyed by the bureaucrat during a random, unexplained fit of rage. The incident is discussed briefly, without revealing whether the robot had a name or an identity of its own, what its tasks involved, or how it contributed to the state. However, the novel does reveal that robots have achieved minimum rights and that their wanton destruction can be punished by law. Robots, then, appear to be more important to the State than the water and air crisis, which is addressed only minimally. Finally, it could be said that the progressive addition of cybernetic prostheses to Lupus' body⁹² constitute a reflection of the progressive dehumanization of an increasingly ill and hungry Mexico.

The ecological subtext of Guzmán Wolffer's novel goes beyond the customary environment vs. urbanization/technology binaries of canon science fiction. It shows the influence of social and political action—or, in this case, inaction—upon environmental

⁹² Lupus loses part of a finger and later a testicle during some of his anti-crime missions. Both parts are replaced with bionic implants, but the text does not focus too deeply on either. The cybernetic finger has an ultra-strong finger nail Lupus uses for climbing walls (Guzmán Wolffer 104), a feature reminiscent of classic super heroes like Spider-man. His metal testicle, however, is simply an enhancement to the character's sexual potency, nothing more (Guzmán Wolffer 101).

change. It does so through the crude portrayal of a Mexico City where technology, urbanization and nature are not mutually exclusive but rather stand, radioactively intermingled, as testimony of recurring corruption and decay. Other Latin American posthuman novels featuring “manly” heroes with robot partners on a quest, such as Muñoz Valenzuela’s *Flores para un cyborg*, present a direct opposition between people and State, where the heroic protagonist and his cybernetic sidekick represent instruments of hope in the struggle against corruption and abuse. *Que Dios se apiade*, however, is plagued with pessimism in everyone—State and citizens alike—and everything. This sense of despair, hopelessness, and loneliness, also present in Mexican scifi texts like “Ruido gris” by Pepe Rojo—to be analyzed in future sections of this chapter—appears to be a recurring element in futuristic dystopian narratives from that country.

Octavio Paz sees solitude at the heart of Mexican history and culture. However, his reading defines Mexican history as more than a mere accumulation of events and layers, featuring “una ‘dialéctica’ y una oscilación entre los ‘extremos’ de soledad y comunión” (Santí 122). Guzmán Wolffer’s Mexico, however, appears to be permanently stuck in the solitude extreme. Heroes, bureaucrats, and citizens alike are aware of their solitude, permanently confined in a nation that will be completely ravaged by radioactivity eventually and then, most likely, forgotten. Unlike the labyrinth Paz envisions, which intrinsically has an exit (Santí 124), there is no escape for the people of *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*. This title, which opens and closes the novel, gives it perfect circularity and reflects the progress achieved at the end of Lupus’ and Leticia/Magnolia’s quest: None. A circle and not a labyrinth, Guzmán Wolffer’s future Mexico has nothing left but this phrase, which is uttered at the end of the novel as half a

passing interjection, half a desperate prayer for a place with no exits and, most likely, no chance for redemption.

Pills, Noises, and Brave New Big Brothers: A Segue

T.S. Eliot once wrote: “Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal” (114). This phrase is as popular as it is misquoted and misattributed—Shakespeare, Picasso, and Steve Jobs have all *supposedly* authored it. The constant “recycling” and bastardization of Eliot’s statement proves his point. The creative process does, however, require borrowing to a degree. This is evident in Latin American science fiction, a genre that, as a whole, is commonly accused of copying canonical North American and British works under the same fantastic-scientific vein (Haywood Ferreira 1-3, Molina-Gavilán 2-3, Vega 4).

Thus, it would be futile to deny the influence of the Anglo canon on Mexican science fiction stories such as “Pastillas de felicidad,” by Jorge Cubría, and “Ruido gris” by Pepe Rojo. Both find their inspiration in two classic British scifi novels: Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1931) and Orwell’s *1984* (1949). The Mexican population depicted in Rojo, obsessed with televised entertainment, stardom, and plastic surgery, is similar to Huxley’s pleasure-addicted society. The pills from Cubría’s title are very much like the calming soma consumed in *Brave New World*. The citizens in “Pastillas de felicidad” are always under the State’s watch, not unlike the world under Big Brother in Orwell’s novel. Similarly, surveillance technologies and television screens are as ubiquitous in “Ruido gris” as they are in *1984*—perhaps more.

Before dismissing these Latin American texts as unoriginal and derivative, let us remember not only Eliot's words, but also Huxley's and Orwell's own thought-borrowing practices. Orwell admits to having used Evgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924) as inspiration for *1984* and suggests that Huxley did the same for *Brave New World* (Hitchens xix). Similarly, Hitchens finds overt parallels between *1984* and *BNW*, such as allusions to massive world wars and historical amnesia, as evidence of Huxley's influence upon Orwell—who, among other things, was the former's student earlier on (Hitchens xix, x). Huxley himself was no stranger to using ideas from outside sources. The title "Brave New World" is a quote from Miranda's speech in Shakespeare's *Tempest* (Hitchens viii): "How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, that has such people in't" (Shakespeare 81). The word "pneumatic," peppered all through *Brave New World* in reference to sex, was originally used by T.S. Eliot in reference to the curvy ladies in the 1920s Californian jazz scene (Bald 6, Hitchens xix). Moreover, in "Aldous Huxley as a Borrower", Robert Cecil Bald boldly states that Huxley attempts to "compensate for his lack of real creativeness" (Bald 7).

With enough time and energy, one can prove that all ideas are stolen. That, however, is unimportant. As Eliot expands, the creative process is not about the absolute genesis of thoughts, but their reimagining: "bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different" (114). The latter is the case with Cubría's and Rojo's texts. While they pay homage to the canon sci-fi classics that preceded them, "Pastillas de felicidad" and "Ruido gris" are more than mere echoes of Huxley and Orwell. The all-seeing panopticon in *1984*, which many predicted would be realized with the introduction of personal computing and the Internet, went on

to allow citizens “to watch Big Brother, as governments everywhere were driven to publish more information on their own activities” instead (Fukuyama 4). This synoptic use of ubiquitous monitors and data transmissions, which Orwell did not anticipate, is the basis for Rojo’s narrative, which then infuses this futuristic scene with the socioeconomic turmoil the author projects for Mexico decades into the future. Said consideration of Mexico’s economic and social history also sets Rojo apart from Huxley, whose pleasure-loving society is free of the infrastructural decay in “Ruido gris.” Similarly, Cubría infuses his text with his own brand of humor, approaching utopia/dystopia less seriously than his inspiring British authors to remind the reader to take science fiction with a grain of salt.

The result of these reimaginings is two texts that distinguish themselves from the canonical sources that inspired them and from one another. Standing in opposite directions, one in the dire and the other in the absurd, Rojo and Cubría engage respectively with new questions of surveillance, social apathy, historical amnesia, and capitalist reach. With a nod to defining English science fiction gems of the early and mid-twentieth century, “Pastillas de felicidad” and “Ruido gris” still ring unique and Latin American.

Happy Little Pills: Medicated Happiness and Cyborgification in Jorge Cubría’s “Pastillas de felicidad”

Mexico is cyberpunk. From the vast, polluted, motley urban landscape of Mexico City to the cyborgian duplicity of Juárez—half mechanical production, half human misery—, there is never a shortage of inspiration for dystopian science fiction narratives with a technological edge. The ever-expanding body of cyberpunk texts by contemporary

authors such—Gerardo Horacio Porcayo, José Luis Zárate, Pepe Rojo, and Ricardo Guzmán Wolffer—is proof enough of this. Yet somehow, among all the pessimistic Mexican dreams of the future, an unusually optimistic voice shines through. Enter Jorge Cubría, whose stories stand out for their bubbly tone, “happy” endings, and humor. Despite their positive, easy-to-digest appearance, Cubría’s texts are, in fact, complex. The author craftily mixes utopian scenery with a twisted sense of humor and horror undertones, always leaving room for sociopolitical commentary on matters from State surveillance to the dubious links between religion and politics. Two short stories particularly illustrate his style within the posthuman context: “Pastillas de felicidad” (1990) and “Padre Chip” (1996).

In a noticeable departure from the usually gritty, eroded landscapes and populations of Mexican science fiction, “Pastillas de felicidad” features a happy, convivial, comfortable society where crime and suffering have been eradicated. As the narrative layers start to peel, however, the true source of this surreal happiness emerges: government-mandated medication. Sara, our middle-class housewife protagonist, defies the system by avoiding the so-called happiness pills and rallying for mental and emotional freedom. As she does so, Sara’s dreamscape dissolves into a nightmare where, regardless of how hard she tries to run or fight back, she can never escape from her camera-ridden suburb or its perpetually-smiling residents. Sara’s neighbors behave in a robotic manner, but they are not the central posthuman figures in Cubría’s text. Sara’s son, Jonás, as well as many of his peers, are eager to become cyborgs for the sake of their country. The younger generations willingly replace their limbs with mechanical hooks, wheels, and other cybernetic implants that are meant to aid them in public infrastructure

projects, while their parents celebrate these “patriotic” mutilations. Cubría thus brings up historical memory and trauma in a different light from these theme’s usual treatment in Latin American science fiction⁹³. Instead of presenting cybernetics as a safe, long-lasting medium for preserving memory, posthuman entities and procedures in Cubría represent means to delete it, especially when it is related to trauma and injustice. Remembering pain is a thing of the past here; artificial bodies and amnesiac happiness are the way of the future. In addition, “Pastillas de felicidad” deals with the theme of (State) surveillance, where the household and neighborhood represent different levels of a Panopticon structure. Technology and posthumanism are tools for public scrutiny as well, and raise important questions about surveillance in the digital age and technology’s paradoxical role as a source of both progress and repression.

There is no crime, pollution, or war in Cubría’s suburban utopia. Nor are there any malcontent characters cursing at corrupt governments, or denouncing industrial evils from (the geographical) above. Although appearances suggest this is an alternate universe, it is not. The only change here is perception. Anything that could have been considered grave now appears trivial, even humorous to Cubría’s drugged-up characters, whether it be personal or collective issues. During a weekly neighborhood meeting, Sara announces that her son will soon amputate his hands and her guests react with “alegres carcajadas” (Cubría 29). Similarly, in an effort to placate an unmedicated, “unreasonable” Sara, one of the meeting participants recounts the following anecdote: “el hijo de doña Tere Zavaleta se amputó los dos pies y se puso ruedas y ahora anda feliz de arriba a abajo

⁹³ J. Andrew Brown finds that posthuman representations in texts and films by Puig, Piglia, Bengoa, and more insist in the cyborg body’s ability to recall trauma and historical memory, be it as embodied memorials (bodies with scars and prosthetics that serve as remembrance of torture) or through computers’ ability to store and protect information longer and more faithfully than the organic human brain.

como si fuera bicicleta, tanto que los domingos su mamá se le monta en la espalda y ahí van los dos encantados, rodando, a dar la vuelta al parque” (29). The distorting effect of the happiness pills is highlighted even further in the following scene:

En seguida empezaron a bailar, a cantar y a dar brincos, porque ya las pastillas de la felicidad habían comenzado a producir el primer estadio de su efecto que es la etapa eufórica. Y todos aplaudieron rítmicamente mientras reían y cantaban: “El hijo de Sara no tiene manos, tiene unos brazos como gusanos”. Pero la única que no participaba del alboroto era Sara, la cual miraba horrorizada las manos de su hijo flotando entre el alcohol del frasco. (30)

While grotesque imagery is clear and abundant in the text, Cubría treats it ludicrously enough to read more like comedy than horror. Yet the absurdity at the heart of “Pastillas” is more than merely a comedic device: it underscores the incongruence of a society that finds bliss in relinquishing autonomous thought and willingly forgetting the history that shaped it.

As Russell Jacoby aptly states, “the sign of the times is thought that has succumbed to fashion; it scorns the past as antiquated while touting the present as best” (1). Indeed, past events—and any lessons learned from them—have lost all value in “Pastillas de felicidad” and are constantly vilified as outdated and unnecessary. When Sara chooses to stop taking endorphin pills illegally to regain awareness of past suffering, her friends retort: “No seas ridícula, Sara, esa actitud es muy del siglo XX”, “eso estaba bien para el tiempo de nuestras abuelas [...] para ellas era natural sufrir, pero para nosotros, ¡por favor!”, “esas son tonterías de la antigüedad” (Cubría 25-26). While Sara’s

main concern at the time is her son's self-mutilation, her decision to avoid the mind-numbing pills stems from matters beyond her own family affairs:

Cuando uno está bajo el efecto de las pastillas de endorfina no hay problema, todo parece nítido y se puede mirar impávida las más grandes atrocidades, propias o ajenas, sin atribuirles importancia. Pero cuando pasa el efecto, la vida se siente igual que en los siglos pasados, creer uno tener conciencia del dolor y de las equivocaciones *del mundo*, y no se desea de nuevo ingerir otra pastilla de alegría, porque se piensa que se puede actuar en esa sobriedad para combatir lo que está mal (26, my emphasis)

Sara is alone in her fight to acknowledge and address social wrongs, an obsolete way of thinking (and acting) that is incompatible with her world. Newer generations, with members such as Jonás and Tere Zavaleta's son, have embraced modernity, technology, and the promising symbol that is "the future." They signal their allegiance to progress physically, by cyber-modifying their bodies. In turn, this staunch endorsement of newness calls for rejecting anything that may oppose it, especially history. In particular, regrets, trauma, and other negative remnants from times gone cannot coexist with the technologized, homogenized, sanitized lifestyle in "Pastillas de felicidad".

The generalized compulsion to avoid troubled social memories in Cubría's text is not exclusive to science fiction, however. It is a phenomenon defined as social amnesia: "memory driven out of mind by the social and economic dynamic of society"⁹⁴ (Jacoby 4). While it is not unusual for humans to forget or repress painful memories, it can be

⁹⁴ Gulnara Bakieva complements that definition by adding that, in cases of social amnesia, positive, often heroic events tend to be highlighted while "shameful" memories are purposely suppressed (95).

problematic for whole societies to forget major traumatic events. Such has been the case with Hiroshima and the Holocaust, for example⁹⁵ (Bakieva 117). Although social memory and social amnesia represent two sides of the same coin, the latter appears especially dangerous: it leads to “misrepresentation and falsification of history” and, ultimately, “cultural degeneration” (Bakieva 93, 95).

In his study of cyborg figures in contemporary Latin American literature and film, J. Andrew Brown contends that cyborgs are keepers of memory, entities that function as both “emblem[s] of trauma” (15) and influential agents in the preservation and “re-member[ing]” of past horrors (42). Brown is correct in assuming technology can be used to archive and protect memories. Nonetheless, technology can also be used to delete and overwrite information: a new save destroys the previous version of a file and replaces it with new data. Such is the case with Cubría’s cyborgs, both the literal—those with mechanical prosthetics—and the metaphorical ones—the physically-human populace with a medically-robotized brain. Their mission is not preserving the past but rather obscuring it and even distorting it. Sara’s husband, for example, cites historical facts to convince his wife that refusing the pills is an error, but his accounts are noticeably distorted. What made Hitler, Stalin, and other despotic leaders dangerous was, according to Mr. Ramírez, not their totalitarian agendas but rather their individuality and the lack of happiness pills that would make all reality seem pleasant and thus eliminate any need for conflict (Cubría 32). Their son, Jonás, reaffirms that perspective: “Todos perseguían el

⁹⁵ Bakieva cites K. Oe’s perspective on current generations and their relationship with Hiroshima: “We must admit that every man in the world tries to forget the Hiroshima tragedy. We all try to forget our troubles—great or little—as soon as possible [...] There is not a single word about Hiroshima in the textbooks of elementary schools. Nowadays adults do not try to pass recollections about Hiroshima to their descendants” (Bakieva 117)

bien y la justicia, nunca se ponían de acuerdo, sufrían y se mataban, y *sólo la represión estatal* los mantenía tranquilos” (31, my emphasis). All characters under the pills’ effects operate under an order vs. chaos binary, where State control equates order and happiness, while free will is akin to chaos and misery. This shared, contradictory mentality makes the pills’ *raison d’être* obvious: allowing the State total control over its individuals under the pretense of instant (chemical) happiness.

Social memory is not monolithic. As Climo and Cattell observe, “it can be negotiated and contested; forgotten, suppressed, or recovered; revised, invented, or reinvented” (4). It can also be twisted and manipulated in order to serve the interests of specific groups or individuals, an attractive prospect for many political elites and authoritarian regimes (Climo and Cattell 30). Cubría’s text is, under its layers of irony, a reminder that there is significant power in controlling social memory. Distorting the past and keeping the population from thinking too much about it is a more effective control mechanism than violence in “Pastillas de felicidad.” In fact, there are no deaths in the narrative, except for those of history and free will. And so, below the monotone happiness of Cubría’s society, these ghosts try to speak through Sara but are ultimately silenced as she receives a mind-numbing injection in the end. Additional voices are notoriously silenced in “Pastillas de felicidad.” With endorphin-powered collective amnesia comes the disappearance of historical accounts from non-middle class, non-white/mestizo perspectives, and thus the erasure of race and social realities other than the comfortable middle to which Sara and her neighbors belong. Where did they go? Nobody knows, and nobody cares. So long as there are happiness pills to take, the *visible* citizens in Cubría’s text will be content to be high without questioning why, and will continue

working for the greater (read “hierarchically higher”) good. Their form of aid: surveillance and information.

Unlike the sensationalist surveillance in Pepe Rojo’s “Ruido gris” (which will be studied shortly), the permanent supervision of citizens in “Pastillas de felicidad” has no entertainment value. It is, however, a political tool to ensure that the population does not fall out of line, and technology guarantees its ubiquity. Homes are equipped with holographic phones, anything happening in the streets is visually available to law enforcement agencies—aptly named “servicio de control de masas”—, and there are “emergency” satellites always equipped to track down and stun people through paralyzing waves, whenever needed. Moreover, citizens themselves act as surveillance agents, policing each other and taking immediate action against transgressors. However, the central observer is never seen. There are vague mentions of “un pequeño grupo de dirigentes de masas” and “algún funcionario” (Cubría 26-27), both of which incite anger in sober Sara and fear in her dazed neighbors—the happiness pills, despite their potency, cannot eradicate fear of authority, perhaps intentionally. Yet no one seems to truly know the identity of the elite watchmen at the top of the command chain. Such a structure is certainly reminiscent of Foucault’s reading of the Panopticon.

Originally an architectural concept, the Panopticon was designed by Jeremy Bentham as a structure with a central watchtower from which an observer can see everything and everyone, but no one can fully see the observing figure at the center. Therein lies the value of the Panopticon: permanent visibility of the observed promotes discipline while ensuring the effectiveness of the observer’s power (Foucault 201). Society operates under the same model in “Pastillas de felicidad.” Although the

population appears to be in a permanently euphoric state due to the pills, extreme discipline and productivity—not carefree enjoyment—are their main goals and concerns. Under all the medicated joy hides a fear of authority and punishment. Citizens are aware of their permanent surveillance and they act and speak in ways that communicate obedience to their observers:

Sarita, a la gente no la salva nadie, lo único que hay que hacer es tomar las pastillas y el gobierno dirige tu vida para que tú no tengas la molestia o la incertidumbre de tener que elegir, y todo el mundo vive feliz, tenga lo que tenga y esté como esté, se sirve a la sociedad como el Estado manda, se toma uno su pastilla semanal y es todo (Cubría 28-29)

Similarly, descriptions of punishment have been disseminated well so that citizens will become aware and fearful. For example, in between calling Sara antiquated for wanting to experience pain, her neighbors remark discreetly: “podrían declarar [a Sara] subhumana, y anular [su] zona de juicio crítico con una simple intervención quirúrgica si algún funcionario se enterara” (27). Sara denounces similar measures taken against noncompliant citizens: “¿Cómo es posible que a algunas personas se les extirpen partes del cerebro y las condicionen para cumplir trabajos serviles, monótonos y robóticos?” (28). Thus as in Foucault’s Panopticon, the power in Cubría’s narrative is visible but unverifiable. Ultimately, the pressure of being under surveillance permanently is more powerful than the desire for transgression (Foucault 206).

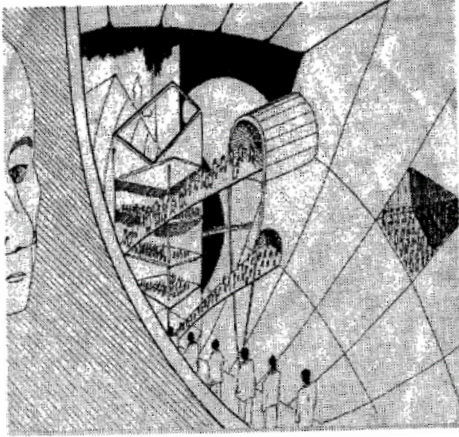


Figure 1: An illustration included on the last page of “Pastillas de felicidad,” where a lone observer watches over stratified masses, like a Panopticon.

The cyborgification—both mechanical and medical—of citizens in “Pastillas de felicidad” is also a product of the social compulsion for discipline. Despite being framed as tools for happiness, both pills and cybernetic implants exist for political purposes. All and any changes to individuals’ bodies stem from a desire to support the State. In the endorphin pills’ case, said support is expressed by not questioning State decisions or meddling in its affairs: “todo el mundo está siempre bajo el efecto de las pastillas, por eso estamos contentos. Para eso se hacen estas reuniones obligatorias cada semana, para que la gente esté feliz y adaptada a la masa, sirva a nuestra sociedad y no provoque problemas” (Cubría 26). In the cybernetic implants’ case, the young cyborgs prove their allegiance to the State by offering their mechanized bodies for manual labor and creating infrastructure. Parents, such as Mr. Ramírez and Tere Zavaleta, are often proud of their children’s *patriotic* choices: “eso es lo que necesita el mundo, muchachos con iniciativa, dispuestos a cambiar su morfología para ocupar los trabajos que la humanidad más requiere [...] por eso debemos estar orgullosos de nuestro hijo” (33-34). In the end, it is difficult to tell if Cubría’s characters are overcome with chemical joy or simply feigning enthusiasm for fear of the State. In the Panopticon, safe is always better than sorry.

The use of medical discourse is yet another point of connection between Foucault's panopticism and the social structure that appears in "Pastillas de felicidad." The Panopticon is useful not only as a blueprint for penitentiary facilities and the exercise of discipline, but also as the configuration for other types of institutions: "it could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour [sic], to train or correct individuals. To experiment with medicines and monitor their effects" (Foucault 203). Cubría's narrative revolves around mandatory medication and body-altering surgeries, both to enhance the body (cybernetic implants) and to inhibit it (brain-tampering surgery)—his version of the Panopticon doubles as a medical laboratory. The text also features the previously mentioned binary of order vs. chaos, also prominent in Foucault's reading of the Panopticon. Foucault uses the plague, a disease, as a symbol for chaos and unlawfulness, agents that threaten social stability and are thus "measure[ed], supervis[ed] and correct[ed]" through various methods and institutions (199). Foucault identifies a dialectic relationship between order vs. plague and normal vs. abnormal binaries as well, where abnormality, while not necessarily a disease in itself, often evokes fear of contagion and prompts corresponding control measures. In "Pastillas de felicidad," Sara is the icon for abnormality; her ideas and behavior not only differ from those of the masses but also challenge them directly. Sara represents disease, and is treated as such by the State, her peers, and her own family. Her neighbors and husband corral her into taking endorphin pills so that she will no longer be "loca de remate" with insurgent ideas (Cubría 31). State-controlled satellites paralyze a running Sara to ensure that she remains within the confines of her neighborhood and receives her mandated dose of endorphins—her ideological disease warrants physical quarantine and treatment. Furthermore, it is

Sara's own son, Jonás, who contacts the "servicio de control de masas" so that they will catch his fugitive, contaminated mother—fear of contagion is thicker than blood in Cubría.

The surveillance and discipline mechanism in "Pastillas de felicidad," however, differs from Foucault's reading of the Panopticon in one major way: the presence/absence of tyranny. Foucault sees the Panopticon as a democratic device that can be accessed by any member of society, thus decreasing the risk of accumulating too much power through the panoptic structure and fostering tyranny (Foucault 207). Conversely, Cubría presents a version of the Panopticon where the exact opposite has happened: The structure has granted too much power to the central observing agents and engendered a faceless, nameless, but fearful tyranny. Although discipline is critical to both versions of the Panopticon, Foucault's sees this dimension as predominant and separate from relations of sovereignty (208), while Cubría presents it as subordinate to and designed to increase sovereign power. This is not to say that the Mexican author treats the Panopticon as an inherently evil device—his imagined society is, at the end of the day, very productive and focused upon improving the country with its army of young cyborgs. Cubría does suggest, however, the potential for central corruption and power abuse when ubiquitous surveillance and the permanent threat of punishment are present.

When Bentham first envisioned the Panopticon, he foresaw an inevitable link between this structure and technology which would eventually lead to "a network of mechanisms that would be everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in space or time" (Foucault 209). As evident in Cubría's text, the Panopticon is still viable in the digital age, but it has been adapted. Shoshanna Zuboff proposes a

technologically-updated version of this structure, the “information panopticon.” Unlike Bentham’s original design, the information panopticon is organized in levels, with sub-hierarchies within each. In doing so, the observed can be observers as well, the two roles are “enmeshed in one body but are two minds” (Zuboff 337). In “Pastillas de felicidad,” Sara embodies this double observer-observed subject. She is an observer in her role as a government liaison in her neighborhood, whose official title is “jefe de control de pastillas,” responsible for ensuring that all citizens under her jurisdiction take their weekly dose of endorphins—whether willingly or not. But Sara also remains an observed subject despite being a State-designated authority, under constant, joint supervision from her friends, family, and a plethora of technological devices.

Although there is still a chain of command at these sub-levels, Zuboff observes, the information panopticon allows individuals to police each other within their levels, thus causing a significant shift in the original sense of “Panopticon”: horizontal visibility. “The model is less one of Big Brother than of a workplace in which each member is explicitly empowered as his or her fellow worker’s keeper” (Zuboff 351). Horizontal visibility, in turn, intensifies vertical visibility by feeding back into it. Cubría’s text exemplifies this well. Sara’s attempts to confide in (and start a revolution with) close friends and family proves fruitless due to the group’s own internal surveillance—with gazes from above and either side, there are no blind spots in the information panopticon. Another feature of the information panopticon evident in “Pastillas de felicidad” is the tendency, within a sub-level, for subordinates to lose trust in superiors who break hierarchical protocol. After Sara reveals her plans to stop taking happiness pills and gather allies to reclaim individual thought and autonomy, her friends and family identify

her behavior as threatening and take measures against her, even though Sara is the control officer in her neighborhood. Zuboff finds similar dynamics in her study of the information panopticon within hierarchized environments: “Once superiors reveal their lack of trust in the power of legitimate authority to guide behavior, then subordinates are alerted to the danger of a broken covenant. When superiors betray a tenuous faith in the hierarchy, then subordinates will develop means of self-protection” (344). To Zuboff, this is a way in which horizontal visibility can alleviate the effects of autocratic panoptic power. However, it is not a perfect solution, as horizontal conflict is also possible (Zuboff 351). Cubría certainly proves it a less-than-perfect solution in “Pastillas de felicidad”: keeping equals and minor authorities honest is worthless so long as the maximum authority is not.

Despite its seemingly utopian setting and ironic undertone, “Pastillas de felicidad” poses the question of whether extreme, unassailable happiness should be the goal for humanity, especially when the means to that end imply giving up humanness itself. Individual thought, collective memory, and body parts are the steep price to pay for the illusion of a stable, happy society. The text omits distinguishable ethnic, national, and cultural markers other than characters’ names, the only indication that they are Hispanic. While “Pastillas de felicidad” lacks any overt traits that would deem it a truly Mexican or Latin American science fiction piece, the text’s overarching message is universally relevant, especially in today’s increasingly globalized and technologized world. The characters in Cubría’s narrative traded their reasoning, identities and even flesh for the soothing effect of a happiness drug. Could these pills be a metaphor for modern comforts and consumer culture? I certainly believe so.

Albert Einstein once wrote: “I fear the day when technology will surpass our human interaction. We will have a generation of idiots.” Or did he? As it turns out, this is one of the most universally shared, yet erroneously-attributed quotations. This phrase appeared originally in an Android app, as a bastardization of a different Einstein quotation on the misuse of his scientific theories (Andrews). There is delightful irony in all this: the bogus Einstein quote went viral but almost no one bothered to check its source, thus proving that technology is becoming too powerful, and that perhaps we already have a generation of idiots using it. Just as the society in “Pastillas de felicidad,” we seem to be trading reason, knowledge, and even autonomy for a comfortable experience that, like a pill, can be consumed. And what is more quickly and insatiably consumed than technology these days? Instead of endorphins, we have smartphones (and how many!⁹⁶), online shopping, and voice-activated everything. Anyone can be a celebrity-of-sorts with enough Facebook friends and Twitter followers. It all adds to our easy, digital pot of happiness. So what if Apple keeps records of all the things we shout at Siri, banalities and secrets alike? If we post our hearts and souls on Facebook, does Mark Zuckerberg own them? To many, this may not matter as long as their own digital content gets “liked,” shared or, even better, goes viral—unlike Foucault’s plague, this is a highly-desirable contagion. But personal freedom is the trade-off for our technological comforts, as the (often dual) cameras, microphones, and GPS trackers in our inseparable devices puts virtually every aspect of our lives under surveillance:

⁹⁶ Cellphones are, in fact, more accessible than toilets in many parts of the world, including India and various African nations (United Nations University, Worldbank.org)

The missing link, to physically locate and track suspected individuals, may easily be addressed by the numerous technological extensions to our body that we willingly and eagerly embrace. Thus, the obsolescence of the body, and its replacement by our cyborg outgrowth could encroach on our personhood and personal freedom in favour [sic] of alleged or false promises of safety and security (Mann et al 393)

Cubría envisioned a future where humans willingly become cyborgs—hybridizing their minds or bodies into something that is no longer human—in exchange for the illusion of a pleasant, unencumbered existence. Perhaps we already follow a similar path, shrinking the gaps between our devices and our bodies and turning into walking surveillance units through wireless technologies without which we can no longer function.

Unending Transmission: “Ruido gris” by Pepe Rojo

Pepe Rojo is a multi-faceted Mexican author with works—and awards⁹⁷—in genres varying from horror and fantasy to science fiction, as well as experience in the advertising and video production industries (Bell 181). It is not surprising, then, that his award-winning short story “Ruido Gris” (1996) features cyborg characters in charge of capturing and purveying television footage to the masses. The text focuses on a nameless, male cyborg reporter as he journeys through an also nameless city in search of television-worthy images. Surveillance, dystopia, and posthumanism intersect in Rojo’s narrative,

⁹⁷ Rojo won the Mensajero prize in the horror story category for “La cosa que vive en el closet y que burbujea bruGBP BRUgbp después de la media noche” in 1996. He also won the Kalpa prize for “Ruido gris” in the same year (Bell 181).

although their interaction is presented very differently from Cubría's "Pastillas de felicidad." While "Pastillas" sketches a humorous, yet horrifying version of a panopticon, "Ruido gris" is based on the opposite surveillance configuration, the synopticon: a central figure—television—that is watched by all. Rojo also places greater emphasis upon the influence of surveillance technologies in relation to mass media and capitalism. In addition, "Ruido gris" highlights critical issues regarding wearable technologies, the commodification of private life, and broadcast media's potential for social influence and control.

In a departure from similarly-themed science fiction texts, "Ruido gris" approaches the subject of surveillance from an entirely commercial perspective. Except for the police, any and all mentions of government agencies and political powers are conspicuously absent from Rojo's text, leaving capitalist enterprises as the reigning elites in the dystopian yet highly-technologized realm of "Ruido gris." Consumer culture and the entertainment industry are omnipresent all throughout, which first becomes evident in the city's descriptions⁹⁸: storefronts lining countless city streets, TV monitors draping the walls of every store, and a population that has purchased its way to (physically manifest) success and happiness. Here, beauty is no longer a matter of aesthetics or fashion alone, but a prominent socioeconomic marker: "Los pobres son los únicos feos [...] uno puede saber la posición económica o la edad observando la calidad del trabajo quirúrgico en los rostros [...] Hoy en día, como siempre, los problemas de la humanidad se solucionan con un buen crédito" (Rojo 106). Rojo's citizens are avid consumers, both of purchased

⁹⁸ Although the city's name is not overtly mentioned, this space is described as a very large, overpopulated, socioeconomically uneven metropolis that could easily be interpreted as a future version of Mexico City.

goods and media products. TV, in particular, has a central place in “Ruido gris,” where a plethora of channels bombard viewers with sensationalist programming at all times of day. The deluge of shocking imagery does not come, however, from scripted, staged productions. Instead, citizens themselves scout the city for scandalous situations, record them on video and send footage to TV stations, directly from their own eyes.

Only specially equipped cyborg citizens, tagged “ocular reporters,” are capable of recording and sending video to be used on TV. In order to become an ocular reporter, a person’s eyes are surgically turned into video cameras and his/her body adapted to record and broadcast TV images while keeping an open communication channel with a station⁹⁹. The hiring company covers half the price of the surgical procedure while the ocular reporters pay for the remaining half. The nameless protagonist (and narrator) of “Ruido gris,” an ocular reporter himself, acknowledges that not only the visual material he records with his eyes but his own cyber-modified body, are a corporation’s property. For example, when explaining why he must search for TV-worthy situations daily, the protagonist states that, by law, he owes the company six hours of video broadcast per day (Rojo 110). Similarly, upon reflecting on why he does not drink, the protagonist offers: “En mi cuerpo tengo equipo que es también propiedad de una corporación, así que me pueden demandar si daño voluntariamente la maquinaria. Además, no es raro que los directores de programación graben tus borracheras y luego las usen para extorsionarte”

⁹⁹ Additional sensors and devices are installed in ocular reporters’ bodies to ensure constant communication with the television companies that employ them. These include recording indicators in the eyes, an emergency transmission button in the thighs, and sound terminals in the ears to relay voice commands and messages from the corporation’s end.

(117). The ocular reporter, then, is not only a surveillance agent but also a permanently surveilled subject as well.

The broadcasting cyborg's dual role as observer and observed recalls the relationship Mathiesen identifies between panopticism and synopticism¹⁰⁰ in current media—such as TV and the web—and their related technologies. The few ocular reporters—and thus the corporations behind them—watch (m)any citizens in the overcrowded metropolis of “Ruido gris.” Yet, at the same time, the entire population can zero in on a single person featured on the live reports that are always on TV. Both kinds of surveillance—the few watching the many and the many watching the few—create a feedback loop of sorts in which one benefits from, yet also necessitates, the other. Citizens in Rojo's text are, above all, addicted to television and acquisition: they watch it at all hours, aspire to be in it¹⁰¹ and, as mentioned previously, pay considerable amounts of money to achieve camera-friendly looks. While it can be argued that such a social compulsion stems from the omnipresence of shocking “live” programming in “Ruido gris,” the population's addiction to high-octane reality TV also maintains a steady demand for more of these shows and, thus, generates significant profit for the companies broadcasting them.

The marriage of surveillance and capitalism in Rojo's narrative is akin to mechanics identified by critics such as Mathiesen and Andrejevic in broadcast

¹⁰⁰ Mathiesen defines synopticism as an inverse of panopticism, where the many observe the few—as in the case of television. The author, however, proposes synopticism as a complement rather than an antithesis to panopticism, asserting that both developed in tandem and have led to “a *viewer* society” in “a two-way and significant double sense of the word” (Mathiesen 219)

¹⁰¹ “Todo el mundo está en la TV. Cualquiera puede ser una estrella. Todo el mundo actúa y se prepara a diario porque puede que hoy encuentre una cámara que haga que todo el mundo se entere de lo agradable, guapo, simpático, atractivo, deseable, interesante, sensible y sencillo que es. Lo humano que es. Y todo el mundo ve a todas horas a muchas personas que están en las cámaras tratando de ser así” (Rojo 116-117)

synopticons (such as TV in general) and the reality TV genre respectively. As viewers exercise a synoptic relationship with television, they also perform the role of consumers of advertised goods. Simultaneously, advertisers and executives survey viewer/consumers' habits and choices panoptically and tailor their commercial and visual products to encourage further consumption—and profit (Mathiesen 223-224). Similarly, Andrejevic explains the allure of sensationalist reality TV to viewers as a converging point between voyeurism, commercial surveillance, and mass consumption. Reality TV produces a passive sense of empowerment for viewers, who participate vicariously by watching situations they assume to be factual and relatable. This “false form of control,” in turn, “links the position of the savvy voyeur with that of the interactive consumer envisioned by the promoters of the mass-customized online economy” (Andrejevic 173). One major problem with reality television is that it commodifies people's private lives for the sake of consumerism (Andrejevic 96), a message that echoes all throughout “Ruido gris”. Suicides are not only extremely prevalent but also extremely—almost comically—trivialized¹⁰². The police and the media address emergencies, such as child abductions, for the ratings they will generate rather than to aid those in need (Rojo 98-99). Moreover, ocular reporters trade their own personal lives and privacy for the opportunity to work for television companies. The latter have legal, permanent, and absolute access to everything the former see and hear: “Vivo en un mundo sin oscuridad. Todo el día hay un indicador en mi retina que indica mi estatus de transmisión [...] Pero mis ojos pertenecen al mundo.

¹⁰² “Los suicidios no están muy bien pagados. Hay tantos al día y la gente es tan poco imaginativa que si pasas un día viendo televisión, puedes ver por lo menos 10 suicidios, y ninguno es muy espectacular. Al parecer, lo último en lo que piensan los suicidas es en la originalidad” (Rojo 96-97)

Mi familia lejana abarca toda una ciudad. Aunque nadie me reconocería si se cruzara conmigo en la calle” (Rojo 100).

Post-human bodies in “Ruido gris” stand as a symbolic amalgam of the half-human, half-consumption-automatons citizens have become. They embody a new social paradigm where consumption and consenting (self) surveillance are so ingrained in the psyche that they manifest physically. The eyes of ocular reporters are actual cameras yet their mental patterns—from brains that remain human—also mimic broadcast equipment and techniques. Upon randomly encountering one crime scene, Rojo’s nameless protagonist approaches the premises and acts instinctively as a camera rather than as a man:

Me detengo para establecer las tomas. Un *full shot* de los paramédicos, un *long shot* del pasillo, y trato de caminar lentamente y fijar mi vista para que el movimiento no sea muy brusco. Me detengo en la puerta y paneo lentamente mi cabeza para poder establecer el lugar en miles de monitores en el mundo (Rojo 97-98, author’s emphasis).

The cyborg reporter’s bodies and actions resemble tools and, thus, are treated as such, as if “cámaras a control remoto” (Rojo 117), by the corporations employing them. Ocular reporters’ personal safety is often expendable so long as they capture and transmit profitable footage of dangerous situations. During an explosion in a department store, for instance, the main character admits to himself: “No soy un cuerpo, soy una máquina que vuela por los aires, cuya única finalidad es grabar y grabar y grabar para que todo el mundo pueda ver lo que no les gustaría vivir” (Rojo 111). In addition, reporters’ private moments are always at the mercy of broadcasting companies. The latter harass cyborg

workers to demand new footage regularly. As a result, reporters resort to keep their eyes closed or fixed on uninteresting areas (such as walls or ceilings) to discourage TV stations from bothering them any further (Rojo 100).

Rojo's human/camera hybrids continue losing their humanness beyond their physical, work-mandated cyborgification. They do so through their role as mere equipment for broadcasting companies as well as the overexposure—of their own as well as others' lives—that numbs them daily. The protagonist of “Ruido gris” is completely jaded with the (literally) sickening visual overload¹⁰³ and total lack of privacy his camera-eyes have brought about. His hatred and exhaustion is reflected in the particular motif of damaged eyes. The main character fantasizes with losing his vision frequently, be it through fatal malfunction (Rojo 110), self-mutilation (106), or else escaping into underground tunnels where light—and thus the possibility of seeing anything—is completely absent (116). Such loathing may come from the loss of identity that acting as a living camera and the resulting visual overload produced upon the protagonist:

Una noticia más. Un *stunt* más arriesgado. Siempre quieren algo más. Más drama, más emociones, más personas llorando enfrente de mi cámara, enfrente de mis ojos. No quiero pensar, no estoy hecho para pensar, sólo para transmitir. Pero en cada transmisión siento que hay algo que pierdo y que no volveré a recuperar. Lo único que escucho en mi cabeza es más, más, más (Rojo 116).

If being an ocular reporter takes such a steep physical and psychological toll upon the protagonist, then why did he choose this path? It seemed to be an easy, lucrative

¹⁰³ Excessive visual input is a major cause of malfunction and death among ocular reporters in “Ruido gris.” The syndrome, dubbed SECLE, will be discussed shortly.

option initially. Money makes the world go ‘round in “Ruido gris,” but it is also a powerful factor in current technological and pop culture trends where surveillance is amalgamated with success, profit, and self-expression (Andrejevic 8)—not too different from the dynamics in Rojo’s text. The advent of smartphones that serve as cameras more often than they do as phones, wearable recording hardware like Google Glass and the GoPro¹⁰⁴, the increasing emphasis on *sharing* all aspects of personal life online, and the so-called “selfie” culture are both causes and undeniable symptoms of a voluntary-surveillance epidemic. As Rojo imagined and Andrejevic hypothesized years in advance, allowing the average citizen—as opposed to trained actors, camera crews, editors, and screenwriters—to produce visual media rebrands surveillance as self-expression and can easily give the illusion of democratization without actually producing a democratic system (Andrejevic 12). The human characters in “Ruido gris” are desperate to have their “15 minutos” of fame (Rojo 99). The cyborg reporters are always there to capture them on camera, anything for the sake of “mejorar los *ratings*” (Rojo 113, author’s emphasis)¹⁰⁵. Despite the grassroots-sourcing of programming in “Ruido gris”, the end result is not a democratic, creative visual utopia. Instead, TV channels are saturated with gory, scandalous, sensationalist content that is breaking news one day and completely forgotten the next. Whether *Big Brother* is watching is no longer an issue in Rojo’s

¹⁰⁴ The GoPro is a line of cameras meant to be attached to the user’s clothing, created “for immersive POV and follow-cam footage” which, according to the brand’s official website, “makes it easier than ever to capture and share your world like never before.” The popularity of this and similar devices attests to the changing role of surveillance today.

¹⁰⁵ For instance, a mother whose baby had been kidnapped and wounded severely deliberately fixes her hair and asks an ocular reporter to film her crying and clutching her dying child instead of running to the paramedics who came to aid the dying infant (99). Similarly, one cyborg reporter known as Grayx goes as far as to broadcast his own medical decapitation as a ploy to increase ratings (113). In both cases, “going viral” and the resulting profit prevail above anything else.

world. Citizens have prepared him an endless visual buffet in exchange for a pinch of fame, but the whole banquet is worthless.

Rojo certainly criticizes the excess of sensationalist media content devoid of meaning as well as its tireless consumption. The non-linear, hybrid structure of “Ruido gris” mixes random—albeit logically related—events with the narrator/protagonists’ lengthy streams of consciousness, many of which center on the incidence of a deadly syndrome produced by excessive visual input. The disease, known as SECLE (Síndrome de Exposición Continua a La Electricidad) affects individuals surrounded by too many electric and electronic devices, and it is especially common in cyborg reporters. SECLE produces symptoms that mirror those of narcotic overdose, including overstimulation of the peripheral nervous system, seizure-like reactions, organ failure and, ultimately, death (Rojo 101). The syndrome is treated in a similar manner as drug addiction, through admittance in restrictive facilities without access to any stimulant agents—in this case, technological devices. Rojo, then, portrays sensationalist media and the technologies related to it—be it cameras in people’s eyes or the tapestry of screens spread over the city—as drugs: intensely-stimulating, addictive, and destructive.

Additionally, the author traces a deliberate connection between the proliferation of surveillance entertainment, contagion, and social stigma by comparing SECLE to cancer and AIDS. As with the latter, the public fear of SECLE¹⁰⁶ results from misinformation and ignorance, as the syndrome is not airborne and cannot be transmitted through casual contact. Yet cyborg reporters are demonized by many for the incidence of SECLE amongst their kind. In this sense, and although the text omits the topic of cyborg

¹⁰⁶ Notice the linguistic similarity between the acronyms SECLE and SIDA.

sexualities, there is a distinct parallel between posthuman subjects in “Ruido gris” and gay citizens, historically discriminated due to media frenzy and lack of education about a disease. The cyborg protagonist makes an overt comparison between the two: “Recuerdo el SIDA y la homofobia que despertó. Al parecer, nos toca a los reporteros vivir en temor. No sólo de morir, sino el temor a los demás. ¿Mediafobia? ¿Cómo nombrarán a este efecto?” (Rojo 108). Underscoring the ocular reporters’ predicament, however, does not attenuate the text’s critical stance on media excesses. SECLE remains, above all, a fatal and undesirable result of abusing surveillance entertainment and technology: “Es la enfermedad de los medios, del entretenimiento barato; es la enfermedad de la civilización. Es nuestra penitencia por haber pecado de mal gusto” (108).

In addition to disease, “Ruido gris” presents a distinct link between overexposure—both of the self and to mass media/technology—and torture. A section of the narrative recalls the kidnapping and torment of an ocular reporter known as Toynbee¹⁰⁷. The methods for and motivations behind his torture differ significantly from those historically associated with some of the countries studied in this project. Toynbee’s torture is not State-sponsored, nor has it any relation to politically opposing forces like guerrillas or illicit-business powers, such as drug cartels. Instead, a group of anti-media protesters abducts the cyborg and subjects him to unusual torture methods: instead of injuring his body, they reroute the reporter’s ocular feed to their own monitor, bind Toynbee’s face to the device, and literally glue his eyes to the screen. Exposing the

¹⁰⁷ The reporter’s name is reminiscent of the Ray Bradbury story “The Toynbee Convector,” which in turn references historian Arnold J. Toynbee. In Bradbury’s text, the Toynbee convector is a fictitious time machine used to persuade society into creating a utopia. Rojo’s brazenly dystopian narrative pairs the name and its idealistic undertones with a tragic character, likely in an attempt to underscore one of the main themes of “Ruido gris”: Utopias are impractical and, ultimately, dangerous.

cyborg to his own captured images produces an effect called “enganche” (literally *hitch* or *hooking*), which consists of intense headaches, disorientation, loss of motor coordination, and significant mental strain. Viewing their own live feeds on external displays for extended periods also triggers fatal episodes of SECLE in cyborgs. The narrator describes Toynbee’s agony during the public broadcast of his torture, emphasizing the captured reporter’s gradual loss of humanness at the hands of his kidnappers: “Los espasmos musculares iban creciendo, y así como el sudor deformaba el monitor, las convulsiones alejaban cada vez más el rostro del reportero de lo que conocemos como humano” (Rojo 105). It is worth noting that, although Toynbee loses his mind completely, his body remains physically intact and unchanged. The cyborg loses his humanness, not by replacing flesh with metal but, rather, through the annihilation of his mental faculties, even when the majority of his body remains organic, not cybernetic. This marks a departure from previously analyzed posthuman narratives, where the humanness of flesh-and-blood characters was never questioned regardless of their mental state and the standard measure of humanness in cybernetic entities was their performance of (human) gender and sexualities. Rojo, in contrast, suggests that humanness is independent from corporality and based on the subject’s intellectual and emotional makeup instead. Therefore, in “Ruido gris” automatons are not necessarily those characters with cybernetic body parts but, instead, those whose behavior and reasoning have become automated.

As Toynbee transitions away from being human, one particular image stands out: countless drops of sweat, each containing the minute reflection of a monitor, cover his skin as if nanocomputers were swarming his body. This depiction presents technology

and information as invasive agents capable of overwhelming and overpowering humans. They do so not with size and might but rather with numbers, ubiquity, and speed—precisely one of the critiques in “Ruido gris.” Motifs such as the “15 minutos” and “una noticia más fresca” appear throughout the narrative as reminders that information is not only abundant but moves fast, perhaps too fast to allow for critical thinking. Similarly, the protagonist describes the opening sequence for *Rojo Digital*, the program that shows the footage he captures, as a speeding supercut of shocking images:

una toma subjetiva de una operación estomacal [...] un tiroteo en el centro de la ciudad [...] todo empieza a llenarse de un líquido rojo que va llenando el lente [...] un conductor que choca contra un camión escolar [...] el sacrificio de una vaca [...] un accidente industrial [...] el asesinato de un político [...] tomas de explosiones [...] un secuestro en un avión [...] las imágenes van pasando cada vez más rápido hasta que ya casi no se distingue lo que pasa, sólo se ve movimiento y sangre y movimiento de formas que ya no parecen tener referente humano (Rojo 109)

As with Toynbee, digital information in this opening sequence resembles a swarm, a nano-army. Each image is short but sharp, and the joint action of all parts produces an effect powerful enough to erase humanness from the picture by the end of the sequence.

Additionally, the former passage emphasizes that, on the one hand, sensationalist content is the most lucrative, and, on the other hand, stories must circulate at high speeds to keep the public interested. In his study of traditional TV programming, Neil Postman theorizes that the pictorial quality of the medium, in conjunction with its emphasis on entertainment, has produced a social shift where the primary expectation for all televised

content, including ostensibly serious formats such as the news, is amusement (Postman 87-88). The critic boldly states that news shows are “a format for entertainment, not for education, reflection or catharsis” (87), and explains that the length of any given news story is too short and content too fragmented and devoid of context for the audience to truly internalize and process its message meaningfully and completely (100). The constant flow of this kind of fragmented, shallow information can lead to what Postman terms *disinformation*: “misleading information [...] that creates the illusion of knowing something but which in fact leads one away from knowing” (107). The scandalous, hastily-presented stories captured and sold by cyborg reporters in “Ruido gris” clearly produce disinformation, which fuels an impractical obsession with looks and fame while simultaneously decreasing social responsibility and engagement across the population. What Rojo depicts here is certainly not a strictly (science-) fictional scenario. Disinformation and socio-political disengagement coexist and thrive presently, and technological developments only seem to increase their incidence. Their joint effect is not only well-known but also mocked today, spawning humorous slang terms such as “first world problems.” However, such a disinterested, misinformed attitude is certainly not exclusive to the developed world. For example, in Latin American countries with complicated economic and political issues such as Mexico and Colombia, financial institutions offer programs designed specifically to finance plastic surgeries. Furthermore, some clinics have developed programs offering plastic surgery to the needy, who undergo procedures from students rather than officially certified surgeons¹⁰⁸. Why

¹⁰⁸ In Mexico, the plastic surgery credit program *Matices* by Ixe Banco is available to any citizens with a good credit history. However, the loans offered “no son para tratamientos de salud, como trasplantes [sic], operaciones de corazón y ese tipo de tratamientos; sólo para cuestiones estéticas” (Ayala). In Colombia, public financial institutions, such as Conavi, and private ones, such as Fundación Total Health, offer a

are people preoccupied with such unnecessary matters when there are more pressing issues at hand? Celebrity culture, which exists largely thanks to television, grows along with the reach of technology while encouraging a pointless obsession with physical appearance. This celebrity culture, symptomatic of the disinformation and disengagement criticized in “Ruido gris”, is so ingrained in parts of Latin America that it has earned its own name: “el culto al cuerpo” (El Tiempo, La Nación). It seems, then, that social, political, and economic stability are not a prerequisite for populations to develop the kind of generalized self-absorption and social apathy dooming society in Rojo’s narrative.

To recapitulate, Television in “Ruido gris” is an omnipresent, inescapable, dehumanizing, torturous medium with a massive, blind following. A distinctly totalitarian quality pervades its portrayal, although Rojo is not the first to describe TV in this manner. Adorno asserts that this medium, indeed, impacts audiences significantly and has a clear potential for de-humanizing and automating viewers. Similar to Postman, Adorno sees a constant—though not necessarily overt or intentional—effort to discourage critical thought in television while promoting homogenized ideas and reactions. On the one hand, television and similar contemporary mass culture media promote automatic, unreflexive audience reactions by being repetitive, selfsame, and ubiquitous (Adorno 1957: 476). On the other hand, TV’s predictable nature trains minds to relish that very sameness and predictability because these feel safe and comfortable (476). In addition, the pressure TV exerts on viewers to fit the status quo promotes the notion that group interests should

variety of loans destined to cover plastic surgery costs. Additionally, the Sociedad Corporación Cirugía Plástica de Antioquia is doing “una labor social” by offering low-cost plastic surgery to low-income patients, who must provide proof of income and contribute with a modest monetary donation. The latter is used to pay for books and academic activities for medicine students, who perform surgery on said low-income patients (El Tiempo).

precede individual ones, thus leading to herd mentalities (478). This desire for all things predictable and homogeneous is exemplified in “Ruido gris” through the prevalence of plastic surgery to fit the same, few standards of beauty as well as the demand for repetitive scandalous TV content. With simultaneous disdain and despair, the protagonist expresses that everything and everyone is a copy, a repetition, an unnecessary redundancy:

El mundo es sólo aparentar que te pareces a alguien que estaba haciendo una imitación de otra persona. Todo el mundo vive a diario como si estuviera en un programa de TV. Ya no hay nada real. Todo está por verse, y lo que veremos es una repetición de lo que hemos visto antes [...] No hay muchas cosas diferentes bajo este sol. Todo es una repetición, todo es una copia (Rojo 117).

Such homogenization of audiences is, according to Adorno, a sign of television’s totalitarian power: “the majority of television shows today aim at producing, or at least reproducing, the very smugness, intellectual passivity, and gullibility that seem to fit in with totalitarian creeds even if the explicit surface message of the shows may be antitotalitarian” (Adorno 1957: 479). The profitable TV shows in “Ruido gris” appear to be more of a lucrative scam than propaganda, but even light-hearted—or, in this case, throw-away—content carries a degree of (imperceptible) indoctrination to some degree (Adorno 1957: 480-481). In any case, Rojo makes it clear that the homogenization, or rather *idiotization* of society results directly from overindulgence in televised entertainment, a seemingly innocuous yet indomitable force. Whether or not his characters possess cybernetic body parts is not an issue. In the end, all of them are

steadily losing their humanness as they obsess with watching and being watched but forget to think and live.

Despite the demonization of media consumption and the industry's excesses, there is no benign counterpart to the technological beast in "Ruido gris". The story suggests, through perpetually deprecating narration, that everyone and everything is useless, repetitive, and ultimately despicable, including the leading cyborg himself. This is representative of the text as a whole, devoid of saints, heroes, or any chance of redemption for old, current, and future generations (Rojo 117). Rojo criticizes the media industry constantly for its unethical practices and disproportionate power over society. Citizens are denounced for their passivity, uncritical minds, and disengagement from social reality. Criminality is portrayed as despicable, but so are the law-enforcement authorities, whose ineptitude is remarked distinctly. Yet the very act of criticizing the police is mocked as a cliché: "Siempre es bueno criticar a las instituciones. Aumenta los *ratings*" (Rojo 99, author's emphasis). Anti-establishment groups are not exempt from condemnation either. The text wittily conveys the ineffectiveness of pamphlet-style ideologies and blind fanaticism toward positive social change by linguistically framing the discourse of leftist groups as drivel:

Cada dos horas transmitían sus opiniones ante una nación que miraba entretenida.

Que los medios son la causa del deterioro moral de nuestra sociedad, *que* los medios están provocando la extinción de la individualidad, *que* miles de trastornos mentales se deben a que los seres humanos sólo pueden conocer la realidad a través de los medios, *que* la información está manipulada. Todo el

paquete ideológico, tan completo como en uno de los panfletos que reparten en las calles (Rojo 103, my emphasis).

Such clichéd language, repetitive use of “que” to introduce ideas, and cramming many thoughts into one excessively long sentence gives the impression of a tiresome spiel. If broadcast media and technologies are the devil in “Ruido gris,” their extremist opponents are the entire kingdom of hell: “No sé qué es lo que prefiero. Si seguir esperando que esta realidad mejore milagrosamente o que unos extremistas estúpidos controlen el mundo e impongan las leyes de ‘su’ realidad” (Rojo 103).

Capitalism is yet another strongly criticized institution. Ratings and fame stand above human dignity and safety in “Ruido gris.” The protagonist reiterates constantly that the widespread, unquenchable thirst for profit and consumption remains a major factor in his world’s social decline. In fact, the most cathartic moment for the main character occurs when a bomb explosion traps him at a department store. Although the cyborg reporter sustains injuries as a result, he revels in the fiery destruction of capitalist emblems: “Por primera vez me siento a gusto en una tienda departamental. Todo es llamas, todo es cenizas. Los vestidos de moda alimentan el fuego. Los perfumes lo hacen crecer. El espectáculo es inimitable. La civilización destruyéndose” (Rojo 112). Although capitalism is openly reproached in “Ruido gris,” communism is never offered as an alternative. Rojo does not advocate for opposite systems but suggests that any standpoint or ideology society may adopt will always have inevitably problematic aspects.

“Ruido gris” boldly eschews the half-baked solutions offered in previously-studied narratives—love as an all-conquering force (*Que Dios se apiade*), the explosions-and-weddings approach (*Flores para un Cyborg*), etc. Rojo closes his text without

offering a definite answer to the problems in “Ruido gris.” The last scene depicts the cyborg protagonist jumping off a building and broadcasting his own suicide as he bids farewell to a world he hates. It is not clear, however, whether this is actually happening or simply a variation on the suicidal fantasy he entertains regularly. The use of the conditional tense throughout the closing section adds to its vagueness. Whether the main character kills himself or not is of no consequence. What matters is that suicide, which the narrative deems pointless, wasteful, and even boring, is offered as a radical escape here but not as a solution. Leaving the world and people of “Ruido gris” as they were at the start, broken and degenerating, is not a haphazard choice on Rojo’s part. It is, instead, the most fitting coda to a supremely anti-utopian symphony. In a nod to *Brave New World*, Rojo emphasizes the danger and futility of utopias: “Lo único que se puede aprender de la historia de la humanidad es que no hay nada más peligroso que una utopía” (Rojo 103-104)¹⁰⁹. Yet unlike Huxley, who pits humanness and reification as polar opposites and prefers pre-industrialization models (Adorno 1982: 106, 108), Rojo does not claim that abandoning the techno-hedonist, ultra-reified lifestyle in “Ruido gris” will repair damages.

By the end it remains a mystery whether there is an active government or any laws other than those imposed by broadcasting companies in the nameless country featured in “Ruido gris.” It is clear, however, that television—and the conglomerates behind it—reign supreme. Rojo’s dystopia thus suggests that, despite the complex political history of the author’s own country—as well as many other Latin American

¹⁰⁹ The epigraph to *Brave New World*, in which Huxley quotes Nicolas Berdiaeff, expresses the same idea through similar language.

nations—there may not be a future for politics at all. Instead, in the age of technology, it may well be communications rather than traditional governments who hold power over citizens. Thomas Mathiesen asserts that, with the advent of mass media systems, “the power of visible and concrete rulers was and is fading away” (226), a view that resonates with Foucault’s concept of power: distinct central actors and institutions become less clear, more ambiguous, and less relevant as power stops being distributed from the center and transforms instead into “invisible micropower” that permeates society from all sides (paraphrased in Mathiesen 226). This is not to say that individuals and groups no longer hold and control power, but rather that it moves to alternate, not necessarily central—or official—sources. Mathiesen views TV personalities such as news anchors, reporters, and hosts as the new loci of power that work in tandem with the micropower identified by Foucault (226). Power dynamics are similar in “Ruido gris,” but instead of reporters and TV personalities (which, other than Toynbee, remain largely indistinct, nameless, and inconsequential), it is television networks and broadcasting executives who exert control over society. They do so along with the micropower embedded in and transacted through programming and consumer culture.

As evidenced in “Ruido gris” and expressed by critics like Mathiesen (and, years before, Adorno), synoptic systems such as television can also function as effective disciplinary mechanisms due to their ability to influence consciousness and social perception on a grand scale (Adorno 1957: 476, Mathiesen 230). Media systems, however, are far more complex than the idea of a synopticon makes it seem. While the masses do watch “the few” in mass media, there are elaborate, diverse mechanisms behind the veil of television and its sibling media—such as cinema and, most recently,

the internet. Rheingold terms these behind-the-scenes systems “media spheres,” which include “industries and financial institutions, scientists and engineers, content providers and consumers, regulatory infrastructures, power structures, civic impacts, social networks, and new ways of thinking (86). The distribution of power in “Ruido gris,” then, has shifted from centralized governments to mass media—specifically television—where it is imperceptibly distributed among the institutions that allow television to exist. Rojo envisions a social order beyond political outcry and trauma. In this sense, “Ruido gris” is not only posthuman but also post-Mexican—perhaps even post-Latin-American. However, the author is far less optimistic than Rheingold, who views media consumers as an integral, active media sphere that shares in the exercise of micropower permeating mass media. Rojo emphasizes, instead, the image of viewers as mindless sheep who use their roles to influence ratings—and thus content—but ultimately remain numb and homogenized. Regardless of where power resides or how it operates, the public remains powerless.

Unlike their counterparts in better-known science fiction works, cyborgs in “Ruido gris” are not part of an invading alien race. They are neither the most prized creations of (mad) scientists nor the products of medical or military experiments. Rojo’s posthuman reporters are cyborgs by necessity who turn their bodies into cameras in exchange for commissions and paychecks. The cyborgs’ work—selling their vision and privacy¹¹⁰—raises important questions about the future of (self-)surveillance, privacy, and wearable technology. Such devices are becoming more portable and less perceptible

¹¹⁰ The commodification of privacy and personal experiences is also explored in Alex Rivera’s 2008 film *Sleep Dealer*. Although Rivera’s work is not part of this dissertation, I hope to analyze his work through a posthumanist lens in my future research.

every day. Companies such as Apple and Samsung have just introduced their most wearable pieces yet: smart watches. People speak of feeling “naked” without their smartphones. We are inevitably heading for what Weiser predicts will be an era of invisible computing and “embodied virtuality.” Instead of immersing ourselves in the digital world, as is the case with virtual reality, embodied virtuality implies bringing computers and digital tasks into daily life and making them an intrinsic part of our physical world (Weiser 95, 102). Privacy boundaries are inevitably blurred when technology can travel and capture images, sounds, and other types of (personal) data. However, what seems to be a concern for the private sphere initially is, in fact, an issue of great public debate. Both Rheingold and Weiser assert the totalitarian potential of portable, imperceptible technologies with surveillance capabilities¹¹¹ (Rheingold 86-87, Weiser 101-102). Rojo’s choice to leave politics and the State out of “Ruido gris” is bold and refreshing, but perhaps unrealistic when considering that powerful technologies and media can—and often do—work in favor of State control.

It is also worth noting that Americanization and imperialism are conspicuously absent from Rojo’s text. This is especially noticeable given its constant critique of consumer culture at its extreme and the omnipresence of capitalism. “Ruido gris” appears devoid of references to foreign brands and business giants, aired TV shows appear to be produced nationally in their entirety, and there is a clear lack of border and foreign

¹¹¹ In regard to ubiquitous technology and pervasive surveillance, Rheingold points to the complex question: “who controls the technology and its users—the user, the government, the manufacturer, the telephone company?” (86). Additionally, the critic highlights the very political nature of any debate on surveillance tech: “that power [to spy] is what is at stake in political conflicts over encryption laws” (87). Similarly, Weiser acknowledges the negative potential of embodied virtuality and the omnipresence of recording technologies: “hundreds of computers in every room, all capable of sensing people near them and linked by high-speed networks, have the potential to make totalitarianism up to now seem like sheerest anarchy [...] overzealous government officials and even marketing firms could make unpleasant use of the same information that makes invisible computers so convenient” (7-8)

relations discourses. Texts like Guzmán-Wolffer's poke fun at border conflict (Mexico has been sealed off permanently so that environmental, social, and political hazards can't spill into adjacent areas) and present imagined technologies as foreign imports. Rojo, however, continuously appears to filter out these elements, perhaps in an effort to make his text as apolitical as possible. Does Rojo, then, portray rampant consumerism in a vacuum? Or is this a strategy meant to emphasize how out of touch his imagined society is in respect to reality outside a TV screen? These are questions for future study.

"Ruido gris" is an unexpected title for a text that is, through and through, about vision. Eyes that see everyone and everything, and allow everyone to see everything; eyes that see more than they would like to see. Visual displays as far as the eye can see, which never stop. Yet, ironically, gray noise is the sound that plays when the broadcast ends on a TV channel or at the end of a videotape, when there is nothing left to see.

"Ruido gris" is what the jaded protagonist yearns for, a time when those camera eyes that no longer belong to him can finally rest. A time that may never come, except maybe in death. But "Ruido gris" is also the future society Rojo envisions, where every idea and (news) story is nothing but noise, and each citizen is one more of the same, a sea of gray dots that moves too fast, without aim.

The Internet is Where Robots Go to Heaven: "Padre Chip" by Jorge Cubría

Jorge Cubría has a unique, refreshingly humorous style that stands out in the largely glum and (post)apocalyptic Mexican science fiction tradition. This was evident in "Pastillas de felicidad," where inescapable surveillance and chemically-induced utopia meshed in a bizarre, pastel-colored tale that morphed back and forth between fairy tale and horror story. The constant policing of citizens to ensure their *happiness* was central

to “Pastillas,” but it is not the only theme at the heart of Cubría’s ambiguous, technicolor scifi narratives. Such is the case of “Padre Chip” (1996), a text where religion, the constant clash between conservative and liberal thought, the internet, and—of course—robots come to the fore as crucial questions emerge: Can robots be ordained priests? What constitutes a soul? Are souls *natural*? While surveillance is no longer a major concern in “Padre Chip,” technology does continue to play a decisive part in the maintenance and destabilization of social structures, both in the form of hardware (robots) and software (disembodied data).

Here, Cubría’s narrative style is even more straightforward and carefree than before. The text is divided in three short, distinct sections that resemble acts in a stage play. Each takes place in a different setting and at various (sometimes distant) points in the future. The first section corresponds to a heated debate between two Catholic priests over the correctness and naturalness of allowing robots to be ordained religiously. The second section describes a ghastly, yet oddly poetic scene where furious masses overtake and burn down the “Zona Tecnológica,” the area where all robots reside, effectively destroying all intelligent machines on Earth. Finally, the third section presents a future where humans are extinct but robots, whose consciousness was preserved via online backups, have returned and taken humanity’s place. Despite the unpretentious and generally humorous tone of “Padre Chip,” Cubría’s text contains various themes worth analyzing. First, its inclusion of religion and its sociopolitical implications in the Mexican—and Latin American—context sets it apart from the canon of posthuman scifi, where religion is seldom a central theme. However, Cubría also seems to treat religion differently than Latin American science fiction authors studied by critics like Molina-

Gavilán. Second, “Padre Chip” is one of the first Latin American posthuman scifi texts—and the only one in this dissertation¹¹²—to suggest that network technologies such as the internet could effect significant sociopolitical change in favor of marginalized groups. In the following pages, I will delve into both aspects more deeply to demonstrate how the treatment of religion and digital democracy help build Cubría’s own brand of Mexican science fiction.

Despite certain exceptions, science fiction tends to be a largely secular genre in both the international canon and within its Latin American incarnations. This is not to say that science fiction and spirituality are completely disengaged. In fact, many renowned science fiction works have been inspired and guided by questions of spirituality, transcendence, and metaphysics (Mendlesohn 264). Specific religions, however, are often left out of these spiritual conversations in science fiction. The increasing secularization of the genre was prompted by the official segregation of church and State in science fiction powerhouses such as the United States as early as 1926, where the intellectual tradition continues to uphold a hegemonically non-religious approach to science fiction production (Mendlesohn 264). Following this paradigm, religion in canon and Anglo science fiction after the 1940’s has been used consistently as a symbol for lack of knowledge, an

¹¹² Because of their date of publication, most of the works I’ve chosen to analyze do not deal with the Internet, as this technology was not available at the time these texts were produced. This was a conscious decision on my part, given the vast impact that network technologies have had on science fiction narratives since their inception, inspiring a wealth of texts and cultural products dealing with the immense potential (outcomes) of these technologies that are beyond the scope of this particular research project. I do, however, plan to explore internet-age Latin American and Spanish science fiction texts in my post-dissertation research projects. For now, I’ve included this particular short story by Jorge Cubría because it serves as a transitional narrative leading to more recent Hispanic scifi texts that focus on the impact of network technologies in society, politics, relationships, and identity, among others.

antagonist for scientific thinking, and a representation of failure and circularity in human progress (Mendlehnson 266).

While the secularization of science fiction makes perfect sense in the North American and British contexts, Latin American versions of this genre do not necessarily follow the same pattern. It is not surprising that some Latin American authors willingly put overtly religious symbols and narratives at the center of their texts, considering that Christianity—particularly Catholicism—is still somewhat homogenized and culturally-inscribed in the Hispanic world. Yolanda Molina-Gavilán identifies a recurring pattern in texts by authors such as Daína Chaviano (Cuba), Miguel Mihura (Spain), and others where popular biblical accounts are re-written from a science fiction perspective. Chaviano, for example, presents the archangel Gabriel as a sexually potent alien who impregnates Mary, while Mihura fuses the Garden of Eden with present day Madrid in his version of the creation myth. Molina-Gavilán concludes that “la distorsión de relatos religiosos estereotipados es una tendencia característica de la producción literaria en español” (85) and asserts that Hispanic science fiction presents “una preocupación especial” regarding Christianity (104).

Although “Padre Chip” appears to deal with religion overtly, it does so very differently from the texts that Molina-Gavilán cites. Instead of justifying religious accounts through science fictional explanations, Cubría does the exact opposite: Christian logic is used to answer science fiction questions. The value and usefulness of robots is measured in terms of spirituality and the existence or lack of a soul in artificial beings. Similarly, questions of metaphysics, embodiment and the so-called natural are framed within Christian theology. For example, Father González, a liberal, pro-robot priest

character in “Padre Chip,” proposes that humans do not understand what a soul is but could, however, enhance it through cybernetics: “¿Qué es el alma? ¿Una esencia intangible? Por qué limitarla, por qué pensar que es algo acabado, ¿Por qué no podríamos pensar que pudiera ser perfectible?” (Cubría 70). Conversely, Father Ballesteros, a conservative priest who opposes robotics, defends his stance by citing binaries such as artificial vs. organic and man-made vs. god-made: “El cerebro de ese individuo está formado por trozos de silicio. Eso no puede ser susceptible de tener alma” (Cubría 63). Father Ballesteros’ logic is humorously contradictory, as he ends up equating the flesh with the natural, and the natural with the soul, thus negating his own spiritual basis. This contradiction is expressed multiple times throughout the text, with arguments such as: “Un ser elaborado artificialmente por medio de acero, titanio, iridio y silicio, no es un genuino humano, es un ser artificial; eso es querer enmendarle la plana a la naturaleza, lo cual es aberrante” (Cubría 64) and “cualquier montón de chatarra, haga lo que haga y piense lo que piense, ni es humano, ni puede tener alma, punto” (Cubría 67).

Under the guise of comedy, the exchange between Father González and Father Ballesteros clearly positions the latter, who firmly defends monolithic Christian ideas and argues against change, as an ignorant, intolerant agent. This portrayal is more in line with North American science fiction trends regarding religion than with the Latin American patterns identified by Molina-Gavilán. However, and although Cubría is an open admirer of US science fiction icons such as Asimov (Bell 66), a careful reading of “Padre Chip” reveals that religion and spirituality are not the true focus of Cubría’s text. Religion is, rather, a metaphor that illustrates the eternal opposition between conservative and liberal groups. Father González argues tirelessly for change, advance, open-mindedness, and the

inclusion of marginalized groups, citing the churches' previous discrimination practices against people of non-hegemonic ethnicities, nationalities, and even genders¹¹³ (Cubría 68). Father Ballesteros, conversely, calls for the upholding of age-old traditions and respect for ancient systems and customs. And yet, regardless of which side is right(eous), their unrelenting debate keeps any voices outside the two poles silenced. Robots are not allowed to participate in the conversation. Their rights and future are at stake, yet their opinions are never expressed. In fact, Chip—the title character—only gets his first line in section three, the portion of Cubría's narrative set in an era where humans have become extinct. At this point, Chip does not side with his progressive defenders nor his tradition-upholding detractors, but rather observes that humans' need for conflict with one another was likely the cause of their decline and demise.

It is worth noting that, while both Ballesteros and González defend their standpoints fiercely in the name of the Church, the religiousness of their arguments ends there. Other than a few mentions of God in Father Ballesteros' interjections about the unnaturalness of robots or comparisons of the Holy Spirit's inspiration to Brother Chip's programming, specific Christian icons and teachings are absent here. One could easily replace the words "god," "father" and "church" with terms such as "president," "mister" and "State" or even "humankind," "professor" and "Earth," and the basic narrative would remain unchanged. Cubría, however, does make one important point by setting "Padre Chip" in the context of religious controversies and decisions: The (Catholic) church continues to be influential and have a certain degree of power even in an age where most

¹¹³ "Alguna vez se negó que los indios americanos tuvieran alma, y en otra época anterior se excluyó incluso a las mujeres" (Cubría 68).

Latin American nations and citizens are religious in name but not in practice. This is evident in the decision made by the United Nations after witnessing the confrontation between the two priests—after hearing what Catholic church representatives had to say—via mass media reports: all robots must be destroyed, and the only sentient humanoid creatures allowed on Earth and space colonies should be non-cybernetic humans (Cubría 71).

Cubría's debate among priests conveys additional non-religious aspects, such as personhood. The main point of contention between Father Ballesteros and Father González is whether Brother Chip, a Jesuit robot, can be considered a person, a citizen, and thus a valid candidate for priesthood. In Cubría's text, robots are advanced enough not only to think and operate like humans, but also to execute philosophical parameters that were once attributed exclusively to humans in their operating systems:

El hermano Chip es un robot muy especial, se diseñó programado en él todo el fervoroso anhelo de la fe. La experiencia vehemente de la trascendencia y las convicciones religiosas. Todo eso está impreso en su cerebro como deseo fundamental, es el móvil único de su existencia, le hemos dado la fe, tal y como el Espíritu Santo la inspiró en nosotros (Cubría 63)

Nevertheless, church officials such as Father Ballesteros, as well as several members of ultra-conservative Christian and non-Christian religious groups¹¹⁴ fiercely oppose the acceptance of robots as people. Their main argument, as mentioned before and contradictory as it may seem, is that only organic flesh is “natural” and thus holy.

¹¹⁴ In “Padre Chip,” the Opus Dei, a somewhat controversial branch of Catholicism, is one of the most vocal groups against robots and seeks strength in numbers: “esta asociación se ha unido con los Testigos de Jehová, los hasídicos y los neostalinistas que son antirobóticos” (Cubría 66)

Influential secular organizations such as the UN also struggle when determining whether a robot may be considered a person whose rights should be protected. This idea is emphasized multiple times throughout the first part of “Padre Chip”: “la iglesia está igual de perdida que la ONU, pues no ha decidido todavía hasta qué punto un robot puede ser considerado ser humano con derechos y dignidad” (Cubría 64), “muchas instituciones no han sabido cómo reaccionar ante el desarrollo de la inteligencia artificial” (67), “casi todas las instituciones mundiales tienen entre sus miembros esta controversia [...] esto es un desconcierto general” (67). While framed in a fantasy, science-fictional context here, Cubría’s focus on personhood and disenfranchisement were very relevant near the time of publication of “Padre Chip,” when issues such as gay and reproductive rights gained momentum and media coverage in light of the 1997 Mexican elections¹¹⁵ (CNN). The questions posed in Cubría’s text about what constitutes a person and/or what determines their inclusion in significant sociopolitical decisions continue to be relevant in Mexico today. Abortion is only partially decriminalized and continues to be contested by conservative (religious) groups in the present, and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations—many of which are indigenous and, thus, ethnically Other—remain disenfranchised.

As “Padre Chip” progresses, the United Nations cave in to pressure from anti-robot groups and order the destruction of all sentient machines. In true Asimovian

¹¹⁵ According to this 1997 article, many members of the gay community sided with liberal candidates for political office because they believed the Catholic church’s influence, likely to increase in a conservative win, would be detrimental to them: “Many Mexican gays blame sexual discrimination and societal hostility toward them on the machismo of Mexican culture and the unwavering policies of the Catholic church.” Additionally, the article states that large Catholic anti-abortion activist organizations such as the group Pro-Vida are “opposed to the notion of Mexican gays gaining political power.” In both cases, religious conservatism and ecclesiastic influence are strongly linked to the kind of discrimination and exclusion depicted in “Padre Chip.”

fashion, the text positions human conservative groups as attackers and robots as optionless victims due to their refusal to violate the three laws of robotics: “Por la noche los domos de la Zona Tecnológica fueron *violados* por una muchedumbre enardecida. Todos los grupos conservadores supieron que quedarían impunes si procedían a destruir los robots que *clamaban por sus derechos*” (Cubría 71, my emphasis). This gruesome scene, complete with the use of sticks, stones, and lasers, is a futuristic reenactment of various genocides throughout history, be it the Spanish Inquisition, the Holocaust, or—perhaps more apropos—the Tlatelolco Massacre of 1968. Just as in those instances, the ruling elites choose to silence less-advantaged groups that oppose their ideologies and/or interests through State-sponsored murder. Cubría keeps this section brief (barely one-page long) but effective through careful use of language. The last sentence is especially poignant: “Por breves instantes la inteligencia se transformó en flor luminosa y fue esparciendo a su alrededor la oscuridad de sus cenizas” (71). Here, the word “inteligencia” refers to the robots directly, but it can also be read as human thought and progress that have been halted and destroyed by hatred, intolerance, and fear at various points in history.

Despite all efforts against human intelligence and progress, these usually find ways to return from their ashes. The same can be said about Cubría’s robots. Although their hardware is destroyed by humans, their data and electronic consciousness survives thanks to a simple, clever tactic: online backups. In the text’s last section, Chip explains—with his own words, at last—how he and his kind survived the the Zona Tecnológica massacre:

No me salvé [de la destrucción], perecí en ella. Pero la ingenuidad de aquella gente era superlativa. La información del cerebro de una gran cantidad de robots con conciencia estaba esparcida a lo largo del planeta. *En aquel siglo la información no dependía ya de un grupo en el poder o un recinto específico.* Nuestros circuitos estaban en internet. Para aquel entonces no era ya posible destruir la información de la manera que había sucedido en la biblioteca de Alejandría. Eran otros tiempos. (Cubría 72, my emphasis)

Decentralization of power in the age of technology, a theme explored previously in ‘Ruido gris,’ is also present in ‘Padre Chip.’ However, Cubría’s world is built differently from Rojo’s. In the latter, communication technologies shift power away from traditional government systems without benefitting the people, who remain sheep-like under the rule of corporations and obsessed with consumerism. In contrast, ‘Padre Chip’ depicts a future where traditional governments still exist and protect civil liberties. For example, the reporter interviewing Father Ballesteros and Father González asserts her right to collect information by reminding the priests that “el gobierno [le] da la autorización de hacer las preguntas que [ella] quiera” (Cubría 65). However, the State’s protection of citizens’ rights does not extend to everyone, as is evident from the mass destruction of sentient, self-aware robots. The final verdict on robot citizenship is certainly problematic: it excludes the most affected group in the decision process. It is worth noting, nonetheless, that such a verdict is reached by consulting non-governmental and inter-governmental groups (such as various religious groups and the United Nations respectively), rather than assigning the task to one central ruling elite, which also reaffirms the notion of wider, less-centralized distribution of power. ‘Padre Chip,’ then,

depicts a more optimistic future than Rojo and even Cubría's earlier narrative, "Pastillas de felicidad," both of which are, in different ways, unequivocally dystopian.

Cubría's robot priest and its kind survive and thrive in the end thanks to network technologies, which seem to be too fast and dispersed to be seized and destroyed by enemy forces. This view of the Internet as a social resistance tool, especially for disenfranchised groups, is shared by many theorists. Andrew Feenberg is optimistic about the potential of network technologies to foster "innovative forms of community," highlighting the significance of such communities "as sites of resistance" (Feenberg 3). Lievrouw, too, sees a latent power for radical social change in the internet: "Actors can use technology to challenge established institutional power and prerogatives, and in the process reconfigure not only the prevailing social order, but the technical infrastructure that supports and subtends it" (Lievrouw viii). Some proponents go as far as to imagine the internet becoming the very flesh of Planet Earth:

When your children become roughly your age... a mega-network of networks will enfold the entire Earth like a communication skin. As communication becomes faster, smaller, cheaper and smarter in the next millennium, this skin, fed by a constant stream of information will... include millions of electronic measuring devices all monitoring cities, roadways, and the environment (Arun Netravali, former president of Bell Laboratories, cited in Rheingold 85-86).

Albagli and Maciel also acknowledge the capacity of network technologies to create new kinds of relationships and subjectivities, leading to increased, novel creative expression as well as new power relation paradigms (9).

Cubría is certainly not alone in envisioning the internet as the key to a (positive) revolution in sociopolitical orders and citizen participation. However, with such enthusiastic views come equally compelling criticisms. David Noble dismisses new forms of democratization and empowerment through the internet as “dangerous delusions” that conceal significant, negative consequences of implementing too many technological changes too quickly (cited in Feenberg 4-5). Similarly, Darin Barney underscores the repetitiveness of the-internet-as-democratizing-solution arguments in recent times. He questions the validity of such claims by emphasizing that, on the one hand, network technologies have been embraced—and funded significantly—by the very governmental and corporate structures the internet is supposed to undermine (19). On the other hand, Barney points out, the very definition of “democracy” varies across the spectrum and so, without a standard meaning and application of this concept, it is futile to attribute such high, homogeneous democratizing abilities to the internet (20). Ken Hirschkop bluntly asserts that, despite its democratizing potential, “the form of the network and the structure of computing equipment is determined first and foremost by the needs of the state and capitalist corporations” (Hirschkop, cited in Barney 105). In “Padre Chip,” the internet is, above all, a safe haven for information that cannot be reached or destroyed by State or corporate opposition. However, as these critics observe, the power of online information and network communications may be more difficult to control than traditional, offline media, but it is certainly not impossible to legislate upon it, police it, and govern it (Barney 105).

While science fiction authors and critics alike dream wildly of the potential freedoms and horrors the internet is sure to bring in the future, some scholars study

network technologies outside this binary. Albagli and Maciel, for example, conclude that the internet is neither an all-democratizing *deus ex machina* nor a totalitarian, corporate tool. Instead, they view the internet as a social space rather than a mere instrument whose character depends on the actors present in said space and the interactions that take place there (Albagli and Maciel 12). Similarly, Ferreira and da Mota Rocha highlight the role of the internet as a space where digital democracy and digital inclusion are crucial, yet not the same phenomenon. In their study of the integration of socioeconomically disenfranchised populations in Latin America into the online world, the authors propose that simply allowing marginalized groups to access the internet is not enough to truly foster and realize digital democracy. Ferreira and da Mota Rocha define the latter as allowing citizens from all backgrounds and contexts to participate meaningfully in the (re)arrangement of social and political dimensions via online media—sharing meanings rather than simply transmitting data (190). There certainly are corporate and governmental factors at play in preventing digital democracy from coming to fruition, such as internet traffic control and manipulation (IP blocking, regulation of traffic speeds according to content, online censorship, among others). However, beyond those obvious factors remains the fact that the interests, needs, histories, cultural contexts, and realities of many disenfranchised sectors are seldom considered in the design and distribution of online communication technologies (Ferreira and da Mota Rocha 196, 204).

Clearly, Cubría's straightforward narrative stands against a vastly more complicated web of theories and arguments for, against, and in constant questioning of the internet and its potential for sociopolitical change. But how does "Padre Chip" interact with this ever-growing—and ever-fervent—body of scholarship and speculation

on the woos and woes of online communication technologies? The text's last section shows a clear triumph for the robots, who return from the dead in full form thanks to the internet's ability to safeguard the data that made up all of their consciousness and histories. The internet also allowed the robots to continue their legacy and reach a point where they could express themselves without being censored by detractors nor silenced by well-meaning yet overly paternalistic supporters—all of whom still had plenty of social advantages over the robots. In this sense, Cubría's text seems to fall in line with views like Feenberg's and Lievrouw's, presenting the internet as a powerful resource for positive, significant social change and the inclusion and direct participation of non-hegemonic groups in the structuring of future societies. Although the text conveys this democratized "happy" ending in a rather succinct and simplistic manner, leaving out the aspects Ferreira and da Mota Rocha consider a pre-requisite for digital democracy (especially in Latin America), it is important to remember that "Padre Chip" is, at the end of the day, an ironic narrative. Cubría is notorious for his tongue-in-cheek, playful style¹¹⁶, and he puts his text's own optimism in check by adding highly nonsensical, off-beat imagery and dialogue to the end of "Padre Chip." Chip's update on the return of robots after the Zona Tecnológica massacre is included as part of the character's conversation with a self-aware, winged orange. In addition to this strange fruit-bird hybrid, the text mentions a woman with the body of a dragonfly and the skin of a flower (Cubría 72), all of whom live in a fragrant, idyllic garden of mismatched beings. In

¹¹⁶ As seen previously, "Pastillas de felicidad" blended horrifying imagery with quirky, absurd humor. Critics like Andrea Bell observe a similar attitude in Cubría's writing in general: "The science fiction and fantasy texts in [Cubría's] *Venus en blue jeans* are distinctive for their spirited sense of humor and almost frivolous attitude toward plot. The narrative voice, always direct, can be wickedly ironic at times and outrageous (though never histrionic) at others" (68-69)

addition to the hallucinatory setting, the text ends with an odd utterance by Chip, the robot: “ahora soy pescador de conciencias de naranjas” (Cubría 74). While I could delve into the significance of fishermen in the context of Christianity and how this influences the portrayal of Chip, I will chalk this one up to Cubría’s playfulness and assume it to be simply the author’s final reminder not to take everything in (his) science fiction to heart.

It would be easy—and tempting—to praise Jorge Cubría for including religion in his text and stamp “Padre Chip” with a golden quality seal certifying its “authentic Latin Americanness,” evident in the use of culturally-relevant Christian themes. However, this would not be an entirely accurate assessment. While Christianity does appear to be a more frequent element in Latin American science fiction works, its treatment in “Padre Chip” stands apart from more common religiously-themed Hispanic science fiction, where biblical accounts and figures are re-imagined by infusing them with traditional scifi tropes—alien invasions, mixed time streams, etc. In fact, the presence of Catholicism in *Padre Chip* is less concerned with religion than with hegemonic ideological oppositions between progressive and conservative groups, or with the ways their antagonism leaves little to no room for alternate voices and perspectives.

However, this does not mean that Cubría uses religion as a simple front without interrogating its significance in science fiction. At the end of the text, Chip remarks that the one and only trait he inherited from humans is his religiousness (Cubría 72), marking a radical departure from traditional depictions of posthuman entities—such as robots and cyborgs—whose connection to humanity resides in their emotional and/or sexual attributes. Chip’s preoccupation with religion, nonetheless, is not based on Christian iconography or rhetoric, but rather the sense of transcendence and metaphysical concerns

that accompany systems of religious/spiritual belief systems. The robot defines *religiosidad* as “el deseo de no morir, el conocer todo lo cognoscible y dominar al igual que Dios, todo lo existente,” and adds that God is, rather than a being, a personification of the human yearning to understand the infinite and eternal (Cubría 73-74). In this sense, Cubría’s use of religion is closer to that of English-language canon science fiction. In any case, it is worth noting that the author’s emphasis on the influence of religion in sociopolitical matters does anchor his text back in the Latin American context. The text also suggests explicitly that religion is often used as an excuse to foster human conflict and, due to its power, it can have significant repercussions: “las religiones eran formas de controversia que los hombres tomaban demasiado en serio y utilizaron muchas veces como pretexto para destruirse unos a otros” (Cubría 73).

In regard to cybernetics, network technologies, and their sociopolitical implications, “Padre Chip” depicts a hopeful future where the internet will become an avenue for social participation, change, and the survival of marginalized groups—represented in this context by Chip and other sentient robots. Evidently, Cubría portrays online communication technologies as positive and promising. Yet, at the same time, the author reminds us to continue questioning these and similar solutions, as well as the seriousness of the text itself, by concluding “Padre Chip” with a bizarre, psychedelic scene where talking, flying oranges, woman-plant hybrids, and a spiritual robot interact with each other. Much like an acid trip, the ending of Cubría’s text is disjointed, completely implausible, perhaps a little enjoyable, yet ultimately dismissible as a mere hallucination. Nevertheless, “Padre Chip” does make logical, valuable points about the increased visibility and reach the internet could grant to disenfranchised communities.

Despite having many sympathizers, Chip and the other robots face discrimination, isolation, and defilement so long as they are not allowed to participate directly in the discussion of robot citizenship and social inclusion. It is only when Chip can finally speak and express his own version of reality that cybernetic beings reclaim a place for their kind and exist peacefully on Earth. Thus, the text suggests that no significant change can be made in the lives of disenfranchised citizens until their voices are heard directly without mediation of hegemonic groups.

Additionally, “Padre Chip” raises questions about new ways to present and preserve identities through online communication technologies. The robots were able to save their entire intellect and sentience by storing it on a cloud server. “Padre Chip” does not delve too deeply into the scientific or philosophical implications behind (re)storing the consciousness, memories, and sense of selves of myriads of intelligent, self-aware beings. Nonetheless, this simple, yet crucial event in the text inevitably brings (dis)embodiment, a highly debated topic in posthumanism, back into the conversation. Critics cited in previous chapters of this dissertation, such as Springer and Hayles, explore the connections between posthumanism, gender and sexualities, and disembodiment. In every analysis, one question surfaces without fail: will corporeality ever become obsolete? Under the gender and sexualities lens, the (human) body seems to persist despite many literary and cinematic visions of sex, pleasure, and consciousness unbound by the confines of the flesh. In Cubría’s case, the robots return to “life” by inhabiting new cybernetic bodies rather than through disembodied existence on the internet. In fact, Chip clarifies that their data had been dormant and forgotten until humans loaded it back into hardware bodies (Cubría 72). It would seem, then, that even

when sexualities are not an issue, corporeality still primes over disembodiment in Latin American posthuman science fiction. However, although bodies appear to be a requisite for citizenship in Cubría's text, the type or constitution of said bodies is irrelevant—in this case, the physical appearance of robots is unimportant enough to never be described.

In the end, the robots of “Padre Chip” require an external shell to function, but their true beings consist solely of data. Cubría frames this idea in the context of science fiction and futurism, but the possibility of existing digitally is not entirely far-fetched. Today, anyone with internet access and online-capable devices can upload bits and pieces of their daily lives and personal thoughts onto their Twitter feeds, Facebook pages, YouTube streams, and Instagram profiles. Are we, too, reducible to the personal data we accumulate on the internet? Furthermore, will uploading and curating our digital personas and narratives eventually allow for alternate versions of history to surface? Will subaltern voices gain greater visibility if they achieve “virality” online? What will be considered “official” when multiple accounts become available on the internet? These thought-provoking questions are worth considering¹¹⁷. Even so, it is imperative to remember that the internet is not a utopia for free thought and expression. Far from it, many obstacles remain online in the form of content censorship, corporate/State control of internet speeds and traffic, and hacking attacks, to mention a few. It is not rare for social network accounts and posts to face forced deletion, as well as undesired editing and altering from third parties. Robot consciousness may have remained undisturbed in Cubría's version of the internet, but actual disenfranchised communities may need significant, continuing

¹¹⁷ For the time being, these questions are beyond the scope of my dissertation. Nonetheless, I hope to seek answers to them in future research projects.

efforts to overcome these obstacles and (re)claim a place and opportunities for expression—and, thus, meaningful social participation—online.

Although the journey to social change and digital democracy through online communication technologies is only beginning, a few glimmers of hope arise in the horizon. Unfortunate events involving oppressed groups and/or minorities, such as the 2014 Iguala mass kidnapping in Mexico and the Ferguson protests of the same year in the United States have garnered increased public response and critical thought internationally due to their visibility in social media. Rather than simply being unidirectionally reported by traditional media news, these and similar socio-politically impactful events are now generating significant amounts of public discussion and engagement online. Moreover, particularly young users, usually assumed to be uninterested in current events and sociopolitical issues, are not only aware of these events but also highly vocal about them on social media. For example, Tumblr, the most popular social network for teens (Meredith), has been teeming with posts about Ferguson recently. These posts, which often include pictures and video taken at the scene with cellphones and accompanying text, are filled with the opinions of many young users with various perspectives on this event and related subjects, such as police brutality and present-day racism. Similarly, many relatively-young Twitter users from Mexico have been highly vocal about the student kidnappings in Iguala, bringing the subject to international attention—a feat that traditional media probably would not have been able to accomplish by themselves.

While the discussion on social media of Iguala, Ferguson, and similar happenings may not always guarantee change, it does create the kind of visibility these situations and the affected populations require in order to achieve meaningful results and improvement.

Of course, States can still intervene in online expression, corporations can manipulate information for their own gain, and hackers and online trolls are bound to toy and tamper with the online data of struggling groups. Nonetheless, the greater the number of subaltern expressions online, the more difficult these may be to censor and control. Resorting to the internet may not yield completely effective, perfectly democratic results, but it is still a valuable space and resource. Cubría's robots overcame their doom not only because they sought refuge online, but because they were many and, thus, too difficult to track down and repress. Perhaps in the still-uncertain, still-problematic age of the internet, disenfranchised communities will find similar strength in numbers.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter opened with a quotation from Latin American scifi scholar Yolanda Molina-Gavilán asserting that science fiction is an ideal medium to express social messages. Our reading focuses on this idea: while some of the texts have visible political implications against distinct State structures—*Flores para un cyborg* on the Pinochet regime—others interrogate national issues, such as the economy, the environment, the media, and social decadence without necessarily aligning with specific political positions. Alternately, Mexican narratives such as Cubría's "Padre Chip" engage with politics subtly, through a veiled religious theme that questions not only the continuing influence of the Church in State matters, but also the ineptitude of Mexico's political parties and their inability to influence change. Some of these texts pose questions on State power abuse, bureaucratic incompetence, surveillance and censorship; others suggests that someday, perhaps in the not-too-distant future, politics will become obsolete and capitalist enterprises will be society's guiding—and controlling—forces.

Robots and cyborgs take on many roles in these narratives. Due to their superhuman abilities and strength, they can become key players in revenge plays against past authoritarian regimes. At other times, they become utilitarian cogs in the State's engine, programmed to believe a life of service and emotional numbness means happiness. The cyborgification process can sometimes be a financially-motivated choice: privacy is traded for a comfortable life partially owned by private corporations. Occasionally, robots have souls that can live on the internet when their bodies are destroyed, a democratizing heaven of sorts that allows for the preservation and propagation of voices silenced by the hegemony. Rarely, however, astounding cybernetic entities become powerless in a country where ecological disaster and decay, indifferent government and citizens, and the complete abandonment of international allies have extinguished all hope of survival. These posthuman representations speak of our own human abilities and potential, and either emphasize the need for action and engagement or express a strong sense of despair—a declining future that not even mechanically-enhanced beings can avoid.

A significant percentage of the narratives studied in this chapter are written by Mexican authors. They approach posthumanism from different angles, yet share many common traits, especially in terms of spatial settings and attitudes toward social and political issues. The works of Jorge Cubría, Pepe Rojo, and Ricardo Guzmán Wolffer display evident cynicism. The latter two feature dystopian environments, usually in the form of hyper-urbanized settings—each an imaginary variation on Mexico City—with a host of problems ranging from overpopulation, urban defacement, generalized crime, and pollution. Jorge Cubría, however, blends select dystopian elements—typically reflected

in characters and systems rather than spaces—with comical, absurd and, as we have seen, even psychedelic imagery. Regardless of style, the three authors portray future Mexico as a ruined country¹¹⁸. This, according to Arturo Zárate Ruiz, is typical in national cyberpunk narratives: “México, el único lugar donde lo peor del universo es bien recibido: si viene de fuera, aun lo malo tiene que ser mejor que lo nuestro.” The absence of prominent arguments on U.S.-Mexico relations in these texts by Cubría, Rojo, and Guzmán Wolffer is rather surprising. The latter is the only author to address the theme in his novel, albeit only briefly and indirectly. Conversely, the Chilean novel *Flores para un cyborg* offers more extensive commentary on U.S. intervention in Latin America, focusing on both U.S. support of dictatorships and the experience of exile.

Many questions emerge as this chapter closes. The most apparent one concerns posthuman representations of totalitarianism. Robot overlords are an established trope of international, canon, and blockbuster science fiction¹¹⁹. However, neither the Latin American scifi texts studied in this chapter nor those analyzed by Brown or Molina-Gavilán feature major cybernetic despots. Why aren’t there more robot dictators in Latin American science fiction? The resilience, longevity, and rigidity of machines suggest similarities between robots and steel-hearted totalitarian leaders. Whether Latin American science fiction authors have discarded this choice for fear of censorship, to avoid clichés, or through mere omission, one cannot help but wonder if this was a missed opportunity. In any case, these are but a few of many Latin American posthuman scifi works that

¹¹⁸ Although social decline and urban decay are traditional features of cyberpunk, it is possible that Guzmán Wolffer, Rojo, and Cubría were also influenced by Carlos Fuentes’ *Cristóbal Nonato* (1987), which presents a similarly dire version of future Mexico.

¹¹⁹ There is, in fact, a film of that very name starring Gillian Anderson (*X-Files*) slated for release in the United States in early 2015. The movie’s premise consists of a robot takeover of Earth where any disobeying humans will be incinerated by machines.

continue to be published. Perhaps the time is ripe to search for texts that feature robot dictators and study them.

In connection to the previous chapters of this dissertation, one issue remains: (dis)embodiment and the relationship between pure thought—data—and hardware, not in relation to gender and sexualities but, rather, as a matter of identity and (often self-imposed) surveillance. Mann et al suggest that in the present, as wearable technologies become standard—much like in Rojo’s “Ruido Gris”—, humans themselves may become a sort of inverse panopticon: the body is the watchtower instead of the watched (392). In this sense, corporeality and data become inextricably linked, as the information collected by the body, which is information on bodies—proof of existence and identity, if you will—, is destined exclusively for digital spaces, such as the internet:

The body has been augmented, invaded, and now becomes a host, not only for technology, but also for remote agents. As the internet provides extensive, interactive ways of displaying, linking and retrieving the body information and images, it may now allow unexpected ways of accessing, interfacing and uploading the body itself (Stellarc, cited in Mann et al 392)

“Ruido gris” and “Pastillas de felicidad” speak of yet another inextricable pairing, that of cyborgism and surveillance. Bodies that hold cameras and tracking devices, be it Rojo’s visual reporters or any owner of a smartphone today, allow for the emergence of a panoptical society. Our GoPros and phones may not be permanently attached to our bodies, but we are already cyborgs and surveillance units thanks to the wireless, ever-connected technologies we have embraced (Mann et al 393). It seems that the technologically disembodied consciousness theorized in Chapters 2 and 3, free from the

constraints of monolithic gender and sexual expectations, may be even harder to realize as flesh and wireless technologies become increasingly inseparable.

Finally, it is worth asking if (Latin American) science fiction is, after all, an effective tool for social criticism. Over fifty years ago, C.M. Kornbluth boldly suggested that, despite the presence of hefty sociopolitical commentary, science fiction is not an effective vehicle for social criticism because “in science fiction the symbolism lies too deep for action to result [...] the science fiction story does not turn the reader outward into action but inward to contemplation.” Provocative as it may be, I cannot help but disagree with this thesis. Kornbluth cites *Don Quijote* as a prime example of a socially revolutionizing text, but the bar Cervantes set centuries ago is very high for any writer in any genre. Whether writing about factual societies or imaginary techno-lands, producing a world-changing text is a daunting task that very few have ever achieved. Moreover, what does “turning outward to action” entail? Evidently, none of Pinochet’s former officers have died at the hands of an android (*yet*), nor has anyone tried to fight for the ordaining of robots as priests in the Catholic Church—they must wait in line for that, behind women. However, given the speculative nature of science fiction, its effects should logically not be quite so literal.

Furthermore, in the particular case of Latin American science fiction, the social effects of these texts may have been subtle and collectively achieved, yet still not inexistent. For example, the fantastic, hypothetical nature of the genre results ideal for evading censorship, making science fiction a viable mode of expression under totalitarianism (Molina-Gavilán 145). Latin American posthuman scifi, too, complements many of the social and political critique expressed in more mainstream local genres, thus

contributing to a collective literary discussion on the problems Latin America faces—corruption, economic inequality, environmental dangers, cultural crises, sexism—and offering, if not solutions, at least a momentary escape and a space for critical thinking. Perhaps the greatest hurdle Latin American science fiction, posthuman and otherwise, continues to face is its lack of reach. If it passes under censorship's radar, it may also be passing under the audience's. Texts such as the ones we have studied are loaded with worthy social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental enquiries and critiques. However, the social influence Kornbluth demands will certainly not be achieved unless Latin American science fiction increases its readership both locally and internationally.

Chapter 5

General Conclusion: It is Not the End for Latin American Posthuman Science Fiction

This dissertation began by questioning the allure that posthumanism has for Latin American science fiction writers. Despite writing from and about a cultural area seldom associated with industrial or technological production, the authors we have studied are clearly fascinated with robots, cyborgs, and the like. The prospect of fusing digital technologies and human function into one seamless experience concerns them greatly, too. Initially, technology's charm could be attributed to its role as a status symbol and the writers' desire to break away from literary tropes in Latin American narrative: rural settings, lush tropical imagery, passionate and emotional (i.e. *human*) characters. Posthumanism appeared to be a logical antidote, with its hyper-urban, technological, seemingly-detached settings, themes, and characters—it challenged everything Latin American literature was *expected* to be. However, as we have delved deeper into the select narratives included here, it has become clear that Latin American posthuman science fiction is more than a mere expression of rebellion against the region's literary traditions. These texts engage gender and sexualities issues that continue to be relevant decades after their dates of publication. Futuristic posthuman portrayals are often a testament to and allegories of gender and race issues in the present. Additionally, these texts not only question heteronormative, hegemonic gender roles and expectations; they also foreshadow the complex effects of technology on human sexualities: new gender and sexual configurations may herald both freedom and isolation. The frequent gendering and sexing of cybernetic characters in Latin American scifi also helps set this genre apart

from canonical, international posthuman science fiction, where such features are less frequent.

Latin American posthuman science fiction is also valuable for examining political and social issues. Authors reconfigure Latin American contexts into unimagined futures—and, sometimes, alternate presents—that resemble neither the worlds in traditional Latin American literature nor those in international iterations of the posthuman scifi genre. Technology runs rampant and machines become more human as humans become machines, yet the evils that once plagued the region remain. One major concern in many popular English-language utopias and dystopias is the progressive homogenization of excessively advanced, pampered societies and their common loss of identity. Conversely, the texts in this study portray far more disparate societies where robots, cyborgs, and cutting-edge technology coexist with State repression, pollution, economic disparity, political and moral corruption. The individuality that ostensibly disappears with excessive progress and social equality is by no means achieved in these radically opposite settings. In fact, it could be said that the struggle and inequality that pervade Latin American posthuman scifi—exaggerations to critique past and current issues—present a far greater threat to identity and humanness than any hyper-technology. In addition to keeping canonical science fiction in check by offering alternative, balancing perspectives on common genre tropes, Latin American posthuman scifi also challenges other literary currents from the region. The texts in this study assert that Latin America and technology are not, in fact, mutually exclusive, even if their marriage is inevitably complicated: the latter can work as well for the State as it can for the people. Moreover, several Latin American scifi narratives emphasize the likelihood that the State,

an almost-clichéd literary villain at this point, may soon become obsolete as other kingpins—capitalist enterprises, the media, or both—take over. Evidently, Latin American posthuman science fiction has much to offer. And yet, the popular nature of the genre continues struggling for respect and visibility, both locally and internationally. One reason for this may be the unevenness in quality, as we have seen, as well as the pulp stigma associated with science fiction everywhere. Nonetheless, the valuable contributions of the relatively small sample studied here indicate that Latin American scifi, posthuman and otherwise, deserves more attention from academics and common readers alike.

Chapter 2 explored the connection between posthumanism, gender, and sexualities in three Latin American science fiction texts. While different in origins and publication dates, they highlighted a common trope: female robots built by and for men. The first two texts studied, the “Minerva” (1974) by Chilean Enrique Araya and *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros* (1993), a novel by Mexican Ricardo Guzmán Wolffer, treated posthuman female gender and sexualities similarly. They follow problematic trends in gender representation set by the English-language science fiction canon and the comic book genre, such as gratuitous hyper-sexualization of female characters and scopophilic writing. Both texts follow these patterns rather faithfully without challenging them nor adapting them for the Latin American setting. Conversely, the fembot in Alicia Suarez’ “Samantha” (1970) avoids the male gaze. This (likely) cybernetic character embodies posthuman femininity through non-visual sensorial depictions that highlight nonsexual pleasure and marked ambiguity. By confounding Samantha’s true nature—it becomes impossible to determine whether she is woman or robot—the text highlights the

uncertainty of various binaries (human vs. cybernetic, self vs. other, original vs. copy, wife vs. servant) and thus destabilizes them. In doing so, Suarez' narrative questions whether such opposites are in fact not the same, especially in terms of women's role in marriage and the home. In sum, the three texts reaffirm, through exaggerated, "robotic" portrayals of femininity and/or domesticity, the artificiality of hegemonic gender roles and expectations.

Chapter 3 explored further issues in gender and sexualities with a focus upon texts that feature male and gender-ambiguous (or neutral) robots. Here, androids were portrayed in significantly less scopophilic ways than their female counterparts studied in previous sections of this dissertation, although in some narratives non-cybernetic female characters continued to be oversexualized. While authors such as Muñoz Valenzuela adhered to this scifi gender trope strongly and loyally, others, like Gorodischer, used it strategically in order to destabilize and muddle—rather than simply invert—gender binaries and hierarchies. The male gaze, in particular, appears to follow expected patterns in Gorodischer yet it is, in fact, the catalyst for the protagonist's near-demise and a source of constant doubt. Thus, a seemingly repudiated element in other feminist texts becomes a key piece in Gorodischer's. This is not to say, however, that the male gaze is gratuitous in Muñoz Valenzuela. Despite its link to problematic female portrayals in *Flores para un cyborg*, the male gaze also bears strategic uses in the novel. It builds and highlights homosocial bonds among male characters, including that of protagonists Rubén and Tom the robot, paramount to the narrative as a whole. In addition, both of these texts continue to indicate a strong correlation between sexuality and humanness in posthuman figures: Tom does not consider himself a man until he acquires a cybernetic penis, and Trafalgar

is inclined to think that Las Mil may be women—as opposed to robots—because they are anatomically “complete” and able to perform sexually.

Alternatively, works such as Cádiz Ávila’s “Bil Tu” and Aldunate’s “Juana y la cibernética” link sexuality and humanness in robots under a different logic. Although sexuality has an integral role in making robots appear more human in both texts, sexual activity and features are not inherent humanness markers in cybernetic entities here. Rather, human characters’ sexual attraction for machines is what prompts this perception, fueled in turn by narcissism and transference-love. Whether these machines are human-like in appearance—like Bil Tu—or giant metal hunks—like Juana’s industrial robot—, their flesh-and-blood counterparts’ sexual fixation is in fact what makes them appear human and sentient, despite their evident automaton condition. Additionally, the confluence of posthumanism and sex in many of the texts in Chapter 3 highlighted novel forms of sexuality that were made possible by technology. Works like Gorodischer’s and Aldunate’s not only brought non-hegemonic sexualities to the fore, but also suggested the emergence of cybersexualities: sexual identities and practices where information technologies—be it in the form of data or devices—become the main component and can be configured limitlessly to the user’s desire. Evidently, Gorodischer and Aldunate imagine futures where sexualities will be more varied and fluid, and underscore human character’s inherent posthumanism as they depict their engagement in technologically-driven, non-hegemonic modes of sexual expression. At the same time, most of the texts in Chapter 3 also foreshadow the antisocial effect that affective technologies can—and already do—have. Cybersexualities, then, appear to be both liberating and alienating in Latin American science fiction.

Despite all the variations in Latin American authors' approaches to posthuman gender and sexualities, one trend does seem consistent: male authors stuck to genre—though not necessarily gender—stereotypes, while women authors treated both traditional science fiction tropes and gender representations in a more experimental manner. In the introduction to *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams*, a collection of critical essays on Japanese posthuman science fiction, the authors assert that, throughout the years, Japanese scifi has looked to North American science fiction as a point of departure, generally fusing sub-genres and themes originated in the U.S. with both modern and traditional Japanese elements (ix-x). Similarly, Pastourmatzi critiques Greek science fiction for promoting Americanization, even when written locally (412). Ross finds yet additional connections to U.S. science fiction in its Italian counterpart: “twentieth-century Italian literature offers a rich, if underexplored, array of cyborg characters which echo those to be found in Anglophone texts and can be seen to embody and exemplify concerns emanating from a specifically Italian cultural context” (222). Evidently, the international influence of U.S. science fiction—and, to an extent, Hollywood—is undeniable. In particular, echoes of hetero-male-centric U.S. scifi become palpable in local versions of the genre around the globe¹²⁰. Latin American science fiction has not been immune to its influence, and the portrayals of various—and varying—expressions of gender and sexualities by authors such as Enrique Araya, Ricardo Guzmán Wolffer and Diego Muñoz Valenzuela are testament to it. Nicola Nixon offers a provocative—yet

¹²⁰ For example, Ross identifies a strong trend of objectification and oversexualization of female posthuman bodies in Italian science fiction, where narratives reproduce “misogynistic (il)logic, mechanising [sic] women, rejecting their bodies, and appropriating creative power for male use” (225). Ross also deems the penchant on gendering and sexing mechanical bodies commonly found in Italian science fiction to be “a clear extension of Western culture’s obsessive impulse to inscribe and control human bodies and behaviours [sic] in the same way” (225-26)

accurate— reading on the impact that U.S. science fiction readership’s perceived gender and sexual orientation has on the genre itself. To Nixon, science fiction is:

a genre whose readership, then and now, is assumed to be one who can appreciate, for example, that taking blue mescaline inspires the confidence ‘you’d feel somatically, the way you’d feel a woman’s lips on your cock’ (Shirley, Eclipse 74). One hardly needs recourse to Althusserian models to determine who the interpellated reader is here. (219)

Nixon also finds that several works of U.S. science fiction, especially within the cyberpunk sub-genre, include few female characters. Whenever they do, even those so-called “strong” appear watered down, depoliticized and are assigned rather shallow goals (222). The situation is not much different for Araya, Guzmán Wolffer, and Muñoz Valenzuela, whose respective representations of female characters—both cybernetic and human—suffer from similar maladies. Their leading ladies have oversexualized bodies yet underdeveloped personalities, and the few additional female characters are usually nameless, devoid of identities, lacking a purpose other than to entertain the male gaze, or all of the above.

Contrary to some views¹²¹, there is an established tradition of oversexualization and objectification of the female body in Western—more specifically, U.S. and European—visual representations of posthuman subjects. Jennifer González traces the practice of amalgamating the female body and pieces of technology with sexual

¹²¹ In his essay “The Artificial Alien: Transformations of the Robot in Science Fiction,” Morton Klass insists that sexualization of robots and cyborgs is both uncommon and unnecessary in North American science fiction, which, in his experience, has always been more focused on the role of the robot as servant to man.

undertones as far back as the Eighteenth Century¹²². Moreover, González finds that from their earliest manifestations, posthuman bodies coded as female have been (re)presented as decorations, commodities, sources of entertainment, and even personal property (60-61). It is hardly surprising, then, that contemporary male science fiction authors, such as Araya, Guzmán Wolffer, and Muñoz Valenzuela, would feel compelled to adhere to such stereotypes when creating female (post)human characters. After all, and as mentioned before, shallow, oversexed representations of femininity are not only enduring but ubiquitous. Simply skim through a new comic book, watch a recent super hero or science fiction film—the J.J. Abrams *Star Trek* reboot comes to mind—or play an MMORPG¹²³ and you will need no further proof that, to this day, fantasy genres in all their forms continue to be largely aimed at hetero-male audiences. It would be too simple to assume that such a seemingly archaic practice could be the result of lazy, misinformed marketing—could it be that publishers, filmmakers, and game developers never got the memo that women constitute a large share of their markets?¹²⁴ I contend, however, that science fiction, its sister genres, and the cultural products stemming therefrom are all tailored primarily for a heterosexual male public, not because that is the only audience

¹²² In her reading of the eighteenth-century anonymous engraving titled *L'Horlogère*, González identifies the figure in the image as a precursor of present-day cyborg figures and observes that “the woman is a clock, the clock is a woman—complex, mechanical, serviceable, decorative” (60).

¹²³ MMORPG stands for massive multiplayer online role playing game, a videogame genre based on the completion of quests loosely tied to an overarching storyline through online play and interactions. In MMOs, as they are known more commonly, characters can generally be customized to be male or female versions of various fantastic races, such as elves, ogres, humanoid beasts, humanoid plants, and sometimes simply humans. A major criticism of gender representations in MMOs is the disparity in armor for male and female characters playing the same class. For example, a male warrior will generally be covered in various, sizeable pieces of heavy armor. Conversely, female warriors may only have small, impractical pieces of armor, such as a metal bikini, as their only choice for protective gear even though quests are the same for all players regardless of their character’s gender.

¹²⁴ For more information on female participation and consumption of genres such as fantasy, scifi, comics, as well as recent debates on gendered genre gatekeeping, see Kaplan (2014), Leth (2014), Pantozzi (2012), and Scott (2013).

they can reach, but because doing so has been misunderstood as a key element of the genres themselves.

Some female authors, like Angélica Gorodischer, seem well aware of the myth that science fiction and fantasy are exclusively for men and play around (with) it—her own Trafalgar Medrano is in fact one successful caricature of stereotypical pulp sci-fi protagonists. But unlike a vast portion of male writers, female science fiction authors have been consistently and significantly more experimental and flexible in their portrayal of gender and sexualities, even beyond the Latin American context¹²⁵. The robotic figures in works by Cádiz Ávila, Gorodischer, Aldunate, and Suárez do not necessarily escape sexualization—sometimes they actually embrace it, as in the case of “Juana y la cibernética” and “A la luz de la casta luna electrónica.” These posthuman entities do, however, feature greater gender and sexual fluidity and, sometimes, ambiguity: Bil Tu is a submissive, gentle, and nurturing male robot; Juana’s industrial robot is an extremely phallic “ella;” the virtual reality sex machines Las Mil use are capable of producing infinite gender and sex combinations; Las Mil themselves are conjectured to be lesbian or bisexual, but their sexualities are never fully explained. Evidently, these female science fiction authors are not adhering to the mainstream posthuman gender and sexuality stereotypes their male counterparts faithfully reproduce in their own works. Whether their choice to deviate from these tired sci-fi gender trends is reactionary or indifferent is hardly the issue. What does matter is that these women writers inject the genre with fresh,

¹²⁵ Contemporary female science fiction authors in Japan, for example, have been deeply influenced by Western science fiction and its sub-genres. Even then, however, “their stories alter received elements—from the feminist utopia to the phallic swordsman—in order to construct a new space for women within the genre” and their reinterpretations have allowed them to “forge a new literature” (Bolton, Csicsery-Ronay Jr. and Tatsumi xiii).

thought-provoking posthuman representations and constructions of sex, gender, and human interaction. Even in the face of international controversies surrounding science fiction and fantasy, such as the recent “Fake Geek Girl” debate¹²⁶, the contributions of female authors to these genres is invaluable.

Significantly, reproduction is—in both male and female authors—largely absent from most Latin American narratives addressed in this study. Despite the overt feminization or masculinization of posthuman bodies, robots in these texts may possess functioning genitalia yet lack human reproduction. In many cases, posthuman gendering is ultimately intended for scopophilic and sexual pleasure of other characters (and perhaps readers) only. Some narratives do suggest a parental bond between inventor and robot, as is the case with “Minerva” and *Flores para un cyborg*. Machines themselves, however, never reproduce. Female reproduction in relation to posthumanism is conspicuously omitted in the vast majority of these texts. The only exception is “A la luz de la casta luna electrónica,” where Trafalgar’s musings on Las Mil suggest that these (post)human women may, in fact, be reproducing secretly and replacing organic women with tyrannical machine doubles.

Despite such avoidance of reproduction, could it nevertheless be the underlying cause of such compulsory gendering and (hetero)sexing of cybernetic characters in Latin American science fiction? Orbaugh argues that reproduction is a crucial trait of organic life-forms. Therefore, robot characters view this process as a way to demonstrate their

¹²⁶ Kaplan explains that this debate, which has exploded online over the past year, “hinges on girls’ presence within comic culture as fundamentally out of place and unwelcome. The articles, memes, and blogs addressing this subject appear to be taking on an increasing level of hostility toward female comic fans as intruders” (62). It is worth noting that Kaplan uses the term “comic culture” interchangeably with “geek culture.” The author defines a geek as “an overly intellectual person who is a fan of genres and materials such as science fiction, comic books, and gaming (board and video)” (56).

subjectivity and prove that they are more than automatons (“Sex and the Single Cyborg”). Posthuman reproduction is not necessarily akin to sexual reproduction. It is conceivable, however, that the gendering and sexing of mechanical entities in these texts may extend from the notion of (sexual) reproduction as a mark of subjectivity. It is also worth noting that, unlike posthuman figures in international science fiction¹²⁷, robots from Latin America have a strong tendency toward physical togetherness and homogeneity. This recurrent portrayal of whole, unharmed humanoid robot bodies suggests an insistence on “pure” human bodies, even when they have been manufactured synthetically. Free of scars, blemishes, or wrinkles, these robots stand in for the ideal unadulterated human. Perhaps this represents an idealization of the so-called “natural” body and its “natural” functions, thus bringing select yet conspicuous aspects of (hetero)sexual reproduction—namely gender and sex—into the posthuman picture. Critics like Haraway and Hayles see posthumanism as an exciting door to new experiences and configurations beyond the confines of the body and, by extension, gender and sex themselves. Žižek, on the other hand, warns us that the end of sexuality is also the end of humanity. Most, if not all, of the Latin American posthuman science fiction texts I’ve studied seem to side with the latter. Even though many Latin American authors reimagine sex and experiences of gender through the posthuman, we cannot speak of *postgender* and *postsex* just yet.

Because Chapters 2 and 3 studied posthuman gender and sexualities thoroughly, Chapter 4 focused instead on the relationships between posthumanism and historical trauma, ecocriticism, (State and commercial) surveillance, capitalism, religion, and ended

¹²⁷ Characters such as the Terminator in the 1982 US film of the same name, or Kiddy Phenil from the Japanese anime series *Silent Möbius* (1991) constantly display their inside mechanisms. There is a definite trend of showing the mechanical, non-human aspects of robots in these and similar works that is certainly absent in the Latin American scifi narratives I study.

with a glimpse into the interplay between network technologies and the social participation of subaltern groups. The political critiques in many of these texts shared a common mistrust in the State, often portrayed as inept and unreliable. Politically-opposite alternatives were also depicted as undesirable (communism in *Flores para un cyborg*) or, at least, foolish (the radical anti-technologists of “Ruido gris”). Critics like Brown assert that social memory is preserved and reinforced through posthuman figures in Latin American science fiction. The texts studied in Chapter 4, however, portray an opposite use of posthumanism: a means to alter and erase social memory (“Pastillas de felicidad”) or, in the best case, make it seem irrelevant (“Ruido gris”). In addition, robots appear unable to save humankind from doom, be it ecological (*Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*) or self-imposed (“Padre Chip”). Not all of these texts predict the end of days, however. Authors like Cubría and Rojo envision men and women embracing technology as part of their own selves and evolving into posthuman entities that exist, in great measure, for the purpose of surveillance. Cubría’s future is increasingly scrutinized and ruled by a panoptical State that must not be defied. Rojo’s dystopian world, conversely, is filled with watchful camera-eyes that respond to corporations rather than traditional governments, and share their vision with all under one condition: the commodification of private lives. These narratives suggest that the prospect of a *postgovernment* era does not guarantee freedom or individuality: alternative forms of power are likely to appear and continue exerting control over citizens. In future research, it will be worth studying if this is also the case—or not at all—with the relationship between posthumanism, power, and anti-capitalist systems, such as communism, that have also been prominent in Latin America.

Race was an overarching problem in most of the texts in this study. If not altogether absent, ethnic portrayals of both robot and human characters were plagued by exoticization, hypersexualization, and stereotyping. Black (female) sexualities were particularly exploited in works such as *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros* and *Flores para un cyborg*, often highlighted as depraved and (literally) sick, in contrast to more positive representations of white—or “colorless”—sexualities. Only one indigenous character, Painemal (*Flores para un cyborg*), appears in this study. His portrayal relies solely on references to “otra raza, otra cultura diferente [...] [que] combate, se emborracha, caza, fornicia” (Muñoz Valenzuela 106) and beast-like roaring (112), thus reinforcing the outdated “noble savage” trope. Regardless of how it is examined—through a gender or sociopolitical lens—race always appears to be an awkward subject in the science fiction texts studied here, often easier to dismiss than to address. In this sense, Latin American posthuman science fiction fails to distinguish itself as a genre. By whitewashing characters and settings, these narratives exclude historically and culturally significant groups and perspectives that are necessary for the legitimation of (posthuman) science fiction from this region. In future research, it would certainly be worth studying ethnic representation in similar texts from countries other than Mexico, Chile, and Argentina, to determine whether or not posthuman narratives from other regions in Latin America treat race in more complex, sensible ways. If the answer remains “no,” then Latin American posthuman scifi will in all likelihood continue struggling to demonstrate its value and uniqueness—and, thus, establish itself—among the international science fiction canon.

Yet it is not the end for Latin American posthuman science fiction. Far from it, scifi narratives about humanoid machines, machine-like humans, and everything in between has proven an effective medium for finding new significance in relevant aspects of Latin American experience: gender and sexualities, memory, trauma, ecological decline, capitalism, State control, even religion. Projecting and extrapolating our fears, concerns, and hopes onto robots and cyborgs provides us with the critical distance we need in order to consider these issues objectively, even when such narratives appear far-fetched. Yet these tales are less implausible than we think, especially at a time when Latin America, along with the rest of the world, can no longer function without personal technologies. Stories like “Padre Chip” and “Ruido gris,” which reference information overload, oversharing of personal data and footage digitally, and the subversive potential of the internet, ring truer these days. The entire planet—Latin America included—is in the midst of a technological shift where both developed and developing worlds become increasingly interconnected digitally. From this point onward, it would be futile to examine any issue—be it social, political, economic, or cultural—without considering its technological implications.

Posthumanism, thus, may soon become a feature no longer exclusive to science fiction but commonplace in all genres, fictional and nonfictional alike. In Latin America’s particular case, it will be both intriguing and imperative to study how (hi)stories reflect (upon) the flourishing of internet-connected, technocentric lifestyles. There already exists a rising trend in over-documenting all of life’s moments via social media and streaming sites. How does (and, cumulatively, will) these practices affect the make-up of history from here onward? Will the boundaries between *official* and

unofficial accounts disappear, or merely find new expressions? In a society that feels compelled to share even the most needless minutia, will the historical and cultural legacies of Latin American nations be enriched or muddled with noise? how will online access and participation problematize validity—that is, who/what will determine whose perspectives are valid or not? In addition, how will the permanence of technological/online media¹²⁸ influence memory, identity, sexualities, politics, economy, and culture? For now, studying the coupling of network technologies and these aspects of human experience—an *internet cyborgification* of sorts—in Latin American posthuman science fiction will be a good start.

¹²⁸ Currently, there is an ongoing debate on the permanence of digital media. With the introduction of applications such as Snapchat, which deletes images sent through it automatically after a brief period of time post-access, discussions have emerged on whether or not applications, websites, and social networks should be required to delete user-created content permanently—that is, without keeping back-ups on a server—after a specific period and/or under request. Many users of online technologies today are also concerned with leaving “digital trails” of media and data produced in the past or present that may remain online and be used against them later.

Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor. "Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture." *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*. Ed. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White. Glencoe, IL: Free, 1957. 474-88. Print.
- . "Aldous Huxley and Utopia." *Prisms*. Trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber NicholSEN. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1982. 95-117. Print.
- Albagli, Sarita, and Maria Lucia Maciel. "Information, Power, and Politics: From the South, Beyond the South." *Information, Power, and Politics: Technological and Institutional Mediations*. Ed. Sarita Albagli and Maria Lucia Maciel. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010. 1-25. Print.
- Aldunate, María Elena. "Juana y la cibernética." *El Señor de las mariposas*. Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1967. Print.
- Andrejevic, Mark. *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004. Print.
- Andrews, Gus. "Bogus Einstein Quote." *Storify*. N.p., 2012. Web.
<<https://storify.com/gusandrews/bogus-einstein-quote>>.
- Años luz: Mapa estelar de la ciencia ficción en Chile*. Ed. Marcelo Novoa. Valparaíso: Puerto de escape, 2006. Print.
- Araya, Enrique. "Minerva." *La tarjeta de Dios*. Santiago: Gabriela Mistral, 1974. Print.
- Areco, Macarena. "Visión del porvenir, espejo del presente: Panorama de la ciencia ficción chilena." *Hispanamérica* 112 (2009): 37-48. Web.
- Ayala, Diego. "Obtenga Un Crédito Para Verse Y Sentirse Bien." *Periódico Excelsior* [Mexico D.F.] 11 Apr. 2006: n. pag. Web.

- Bakieva, G. A. *Social Memory and Contemporaneity*. Ed. Maura Donohue. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: National Academy of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2007. Print.
- Bald, Robert Cecil. "Aldous Huxley as a Borrower." *Aldous Huxley*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2010. 3-9. Print.
- Balsamo, Anne. "Reading Cyborgs Writing Feminism." *Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs, and Cyberspace*. Ed. Jenny Wolmark. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. 145-56. Print.
- Barney, Darin David. *Prometheus Wired: The Hope for Democracy in the Age of Network Technology*. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago, 2000. Print.
- Battaglia, Debora. "Multiplicities: An Anthropologist's Thoughts on Replicants and Clones in Popular Film." *Critical Inquiry* 27.3 (2001): 493-514. Web.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994. Print.
- Bell, Andrea. "Jorge Cubría." *Latin American Science Fiction Writers: An A-to-Z Guide*. Ed. Darrell B. Lockhart. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004. 66-69. Print.
- . "Pepe Rojo Solís." *Latin American Science Fiction Writers: An A-to-Z Guide*. Ed. Darrell B. Lockhart. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004. 181-85. Print.
- . "Science Fiction in Latin America: Reawakenings." *Science Fiction Studies* 26.3 (1999): 441-46. Web.
- Bell, Andrea and Yolanda Molina Gavilán. "Science Fiction in Latin America and Spain." Introduction. *Cosmos Latinos: An Anthology of Science Fiction from Latin America and Spain*. Ed. Andrea Bell and Yolanda Molina Gavilán. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2003. 1-19. Print.

- Bergstrom, Janet. "Androids and Androgyny." *Camera Obscura* 15 (1988): 37-43. Print.
- Bletter, Nathaniel. "The Virtues and Vices of Virtual Reality." *Design Quarterly* 159 (1993): 38-44. Print.
- Bolton, Christopher, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, and Takayuki Tatsumi. "Introduction." Introduction. *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2007. Kindle file.
- Bookchin, Murray. *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*. Palo Alto, CA: Cheshire, 1982. Print.
- Bould, Mark, and Sherryl Vint. *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction*. London: Routledge, 2011. Print.
- Brown, J. Andrew. *Cyborgs in Latin America*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.
- . "Test Tube Envy at the Turn of the Century." *Test Tube Envy: Science and Power in Argentine Narrative*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 2005. 189-216. Print.
- Bustelo, Gabriela. *Planeta Hembra*. Barcelona: RBA, 2001. Print.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- Butler, Samuel. "Darwin Among the Machines." *The Press* [Christchurch, New Zealand] 13 June 1863: n. pag. Print. Transcript found online at <http://commonsenseatheism.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Butler-Darwin-Among-the-Machines.pdf>
- Cádiz Ávila, Ilda. "Bil Tu." *La casa junto al mar y otros cuentos*. Santiago: Leo Ediciones, 1983. 223-32. Print.

- Castellano Girón, Hernán. "Mi reciente lectura de "Juana y la cibernética" (1963)."
Puerto De Escape-Editorial De Literatura Fantástica Y Ciencia Ficción Chilena.
Editorial Puerto De Escape, 28 Sept. 2008. Web. 27 Nov. 2013.
- "Cirugía Plástica a Crédito." *El Tiempo* [Bogotá] 26 Mar. 2002: n. pag. Web.
- Climo, Jacob, and Maria G. Cattell. "Meaning in Social Memory and History:
Anthropological Perspectives." Introduction. *Social Memory and History:
Anthropological Perspectives*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2002. 1-36. Print.
- Connell, R. W., and James W. Messerschmidt. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the
Concept." *Gender and Society* 19.6 (2005): 829-59. Web.
- Connell, R. W. "The Social Organization of Masculinity." *Masculinities*. 2nd ed.
Berkeley: University of California, 2005. 67-86. Print.
- Cubría, Jorge. "Padre Chip." *Bajo el signo de Alpha: Antología*. México: Ciencia Ficción
y Fantasía Mexicana, 2000. 63-74. Web.
- . "Pastillas De Felicidad." *Venus En Blue Jeans: Y Otros Cuentos De Chicle*. México:
EDAMEX, 1997. 25-35. Print.
- "Cuckold." Oxford Dictionaries. Oxford English Dictionary, n.d. Web. 17 Jan. 2014.
- Deutsch, Francine M. "Strategies Men Use to Resist." *Men's Lives*. Ed. Michael S.
Kimmel and Michael A. Messner. 7th ed. New York: Macmillan, 2007. 401-07.
Print.
- Devarajan, Shanta. "More Cell Phones than Toilets." *Africa Can End Poverty: A Blog
About the Economic Challenges and Opportunities Facing Africa*. The World
Bank, 12 Apr. 2010. Web. <<http://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/more-cell-phones-than-toilets>>.

- Doane, Mary Ann. "Technophilia." *Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs, and Cyberspace*. Ed. Jenny Wolmark. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. 20-33. Print.
- Doniger, Wendy. "Bisexual Transformations." *Splitting the Difference: Gender and Myth in Ancient Greece and India*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999. 260-302. Print.
- Dunbar, Brian. "1968 Science Fiction Is Today's Reality." *NASA*. NASA, 21 Oct. 2014. Web. 22 Feb. 2015.
<http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/main/2001_anniversary.html#.VOoYkfnaGPQ>.
- "El Culto Al Cuerpo." *La Nación* [Buenos Aires] 15 Feb. 2014: n. pag. Web.
- Eliot, T. S. "Philip Massinger." *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*. London: Methuen, 1960. 112-30. Print.
- Espinosa, Patricia. "El desembarco de un cyborg." *La Época* [Santiago De Chile] 8 Feb. 1998: 3. Print.
- Feenberg, Andrew. *Questioning Technology*. London: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- . "Toward a Critical Theory of the Internet." Introduction. *(Re)inventing the Internet: Critical Case Studies*. Ed. Andrew Feenberg and Norm Friesen. Rotterdam: Sense, 2012. 3-17. Print.
- Feresten, Spike. "The Wig Master." *Seinfeld*. NBC. 4 Apr. 1996. Television.
- Fernbach, Amanda. *Fantasies of Fetishism: From Decadence to the Post-human*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2002. Print.

- Ferreira, Jonatas, and Maria Eduarda Da Mota Rocha. "Digital Democracy: Beyond the Idea of Distributive Justice." *Information, Power, and Politics: Technological and Institutional Mediations*. Ed. Sarita Albagli and Maria Lucia Maciel. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010. 189-206. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism." Trans. Alan Sheridan. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 2nd ed. New York: Vintage, 1995. 195-228. Print.
- Foster, Thomas. "The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic: Posthuman Narratives and the Construction of Desire." *The Souls of Cyberfolk: Posthumanism as Vernacular Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005. 81-114. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Observations on Transference-Love." *Journal of Psychotherapy Practice and Research* 2.2 (1993): 171-80. Web.
- . *The Uncanny*. N.p.: n.p., 1919. N. pag. Web.
<http://www.nasaht.com.au/web_images/08%20Freud.pdf>.
- Fukuyama, Francis. "A Tale of Two Dystopias." *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002. 3-17. Print.
- Gonzalez, Jennifer. "Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research." *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*. Ed. Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward, and Fiona Hovenden. 1st ed. London: Routledge, 2000. 58-73. Print.
- Gorodischer, Angélica. "A La Luz De La Casta Luna Electrónica." *Casta Luna Electrónica*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Andromeda, 1977. 133-53. Print.
- Graham, Elaine L. *Representations of the Post/human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2002. Print.

- Graham, Stephen. "Anti-Utopian Ripostes: Cyberpunk Science Fiction and Critical Urban Social Science." *The Cybercities Reader*. Ed. Stephen Graham. London: Routledge, 2004. 389-90. Print.
- "Greater Access to Cell Phones Than Toilets in India." *UN: United Nations University*. Unu.edu, 14 Apr. 2010. Web. <<http://unu.edu/media-relations/releases/greater-access-to-cell-phones-than-toilets-in-india.html>>.
- Green, Adam Isaiah. "The Social Organization of Desire: The Sexual Fields Approach." *Sociological Theory* 26.1 (2008): 25-50. Print.
- Guijarro-Crouch, Mercedes. "Elena Aldunate." *Latin American Science Fiction Writers: An A-to-Z Guide*. Ed. Darrell B. Lockhart. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004. 13-16. Print.
- . "Ilda Cádiz Avila." *Latin American Science Fiction Writers: An A-to-Z Guide*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004. 42-45. Print.
- Gunn, James. "Science Fiction Around the World." *World Literature Today* 84.3 (2010): 27-29. Print.
- Guzmán Wolffer, Ricardo. *Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*. México: Consejo Nacional Para la Cultura y las Artes, 1993. Print.
- Hakim, Catherine. "Erotic Capital." *European Sociological Review* 26.5 (2010): 499-518. Print.
- Halberstam, Judith. "Automating Gender: Postmodern Feminism in the Age of the Intelligent Machine." *Feminist Studies* 17.3 (1991): 439-60. Print.

- Haraway, Donna J. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999. Print.
- . "The Life Cycle of Cyborgs: Writing the Posthuman." *Cybersexualities*. Ed. Jenny Wolmark. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. 157-73. Print.
- Haywood Ferreira, Rachel. "Latin American Science Fiction Discovers Its Roots." Introduction. *The Emergence of Latin American Science Fiction*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2011. 1-14. Print.
- Hill Collins, Patricia. "The Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood." *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2000. 123-48. Print.
- Hitchens, Christopher. "Foreword." Foreword. *Brave New World: With the Essay "Brave New World Revisited"* By Aldous Huxley. New York: Harper Perrenial Modern Classics, 2010. Vii-Xxi. Print.
- Hoeg, Jerry. "Angelica Gorodischer." Ed. Darrell B. Lockhart. *Latin American Science Fiction Writers: An A-to-Z Guide*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004. 95-99. Print.
- Hofstadter, Douglas R. "The Ineradicable Eliza Effect and Its Dangers." *Fluid Concepts & Creative Analogies: Computer Models of the Fundamental Mechanisms of Thought*. New York: Basic, 1995. 155-68. Print.

- Hsieh, Paul. "8 Star Trek Technologies Moving From Science Fiction To Science Fact." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 24 June 2014. Web. 22 Feb. 2015.
<<http://www.forbes.com/sites/paulhsieh/2014/06/24/8-star-trek-technologies/>>.
- Hughes, Rowland. "The Ends of the Earth: Nature, Narrative, and Identity in Dystopian Film." *Critical Survey* 25.2 (2013): 22-39. Web.
- Jacoby, Russell. "Social Amnesia and the New Ideologues." *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing*. Boston: Beacon, 1975. 1-18. Print.
- Kaplan, Lisa H. "Soaring to New (?) Heights: Cute, Tough, Geek Girls and Post-Feminist Discourse." *It Happens at Comic-Con: Ethnographic Essays on a Pop Culture Phenomenon*. Ed. Ben Bolling and Matthew J. Smith. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014. 52-62. Print.
- Klass, Morton. "The Artificial Alien: Transformations of the Robot in Science Fiction." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Special Issue: Robotics: Future Factories, Future Workers* 470 (1983): 171-79. Print.
- Kornbluth, C.M. "The Failure of the Science Fiction Novel as Social Criticism." *American Science Fiction Classic Novels of the 50s*. The Library of America, 2012. Originally published in 1959. Web.
<http://www.loa.org/sciencefiction/biographies/pohl_failure.jsp>.
- Krugoyov Silver, Anna. "The Cyborg Mystique: 'The Stepford Wives' and Second Wave Feminism." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 30.1/2 (2002): 60-76. Print.
- Kurzweil, Ray. *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. New York: Viking, 2005. Print.

- Leaver, Tama. "Post-Humanism and Ecocide in William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*." *The Cyberpunk Project*. N.p., n.d. Web. <http://project.cyberpunk.ru/idb/post-humanism_and_ecocide.html>.
- Lefanu, Sarah. *Feminism and Science Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989. Print.
- Leth, Kate. "Merch Ado." *Comics Alliance*. Comics Alliance, 17 Feb. 2014. Web. 15 Apr. 2014.
- Levy, David. *Love + Sex with Robots: The Evolution of Human-robot Relations*. New York: HarperCollins, 2007. Print.
- Lievrouw, Leah A. "The Internet, as Though Agency Mattered." Foreword. *(Re)inventing the Internet: Critical Case Studies*. Ed. Andrew Feenberg and Norm Friesen. Rotterdam: Sense, 2012. Vii-X. Print.
- Liu, Catherine. *Copying Machines: Taking Notes for the Automaton*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000. Print.
- MacKinnon, Catharine. "Sexuality." *The Second Wave: a Reader in Feminist Theory*. Ed. Linda J. Nicholson. New York: Routledge, 1997. 158-80. Print.
- Mann, Steve, James Fung, Mark Federman, and Gianluca Baccanico. "Panopdecon: Deconstructing, Decontaminating, and Decontextualizing Panopticism in the Postcyborg Era." *Surveillance and Society* 1.3 (2003): n. pag. Web.
- Mathiesen, Thomas. "The Viewer Society: Michel Foucault's 'Panopticon' Revisited." *Theoretical Criminology* 1.2 (1997): 215-34. Web.
- McDonald, Brent. "Information Technology in Star Trek: Android vs Android, iPads vs PADDs, Facebook vs the Borg." *Star Trek and History*. Ed. Nancy Ruth Reagin. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013. N. pag. Web.

Mendlesohn, Farah. "Religion and Science Fiction." *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*. Ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 264-75. Print.

Meredith, Leslie. "Yes, You've Chased Your Kids off Facebook—here's Where They Went." *TODAY*. CNBCNews.com, 8 May 2013. Web.

<<http://www.today.com/money/yes-youve-chased-your-kids-facebook-heres-where-they-went-1C9840070>>.

"Mexican Gays Poised to Make Demands for Change." *CNN World News*. CNN, 27 July 1997. Web. <<http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9707/27/mexico.gays/>>.

Mikryukova, Evgenia. "The Politics of Environment and Apocalyptic Narrative." Academia.Edu, n.d. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.

<https://www.academia.edu/2775072/Working_Paper_The_Politics_of_Environment_and_Apocalyptic_Narrative>.

Milanich, Nara. "Women, Children, and the Social Organization of Domestic Labor in Chile." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 91.1 (2011): 29-62. Print.

Miller, Mark Crispin. "The Robot in the Western Mind." *Boxed In: The Culture of TV*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1988. 285-308. Print.

Molina-Gavilán, Yolanda. *Ciencia ficción en español: Una mitología moderna ante el cambio*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2002.

Muñoz Valenzuela, Diego. *Flores para un cyborg*. Santiago: Grijalbo Mondadori, 1997. Print.

- Nass, Clifford, Jonathan Steuer, and Ellen R. Tauber. "Computers Are Social Actors." *CHI '94 Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (1994): 72-78. Print.
- Nixon, Nicola. "Cyberpunk: Preparing the Ground for Revolution or Keeping the Boys Satisfied?" *Science Fiction Studies* 19.2 (1992): 219-35. Print.
- Orbaugh, Sharalyn. "Sex and the Single Cyborg: Japanese Popular Culture Experiments in Subjectivity." *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime*. Ed. Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, and Takayuki Tatsumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2007. Kindle file.
- Pantozzi, Jill. "DC Comics Nielsen Survey Results Are In, They Are Interesting." *The Mary Sue*. The Mary Sue, LLC, 10 Feb. 2012. Web. 15 Apr. 2014.
- Pappas DeLuca, Katina. "Transcending Gendered Boundaries: Migration for Domestic Labour in Chile." *Gender, Migration, and Domestic Service*. Ed. Janet Henshall Momsen. London: Routledge, 1999. 98-114. Print.
- Parker, Jo Alyson. "Gendering the Robot: Stanislaw Lem's 'The Mask'" *Science Fiction Studies* 19.2 (1992): 178-91. Print.
- Pastourmatzi, Domna. "Hellenic Magazines of Science Fiction." *Science Fiction Studies* 26.3 (1999): 412-30. Print.
- Paul, Carlos. "La literatura de ciencia ficción está perdiendo espacios: Guzmán Wolfffer." *La Jornada*. DEMOS: Desarrollo De Medios S.A., n.d. Web. 19 Dec. 2014.
<<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2008/01/12/index.php?section=cultura&article=a08n1cul>>.

- Pierce, John J. "Artificial Intelligence." *Great Themes of Science Fiction: A Study in Imagination and Evolution*. New York: Greenwood, 1987. 77-94. Print.
- Pieters, Cornelis. "Enhancing Human Intelligence." *Into Complexity: A Pattern-oriented Approach to Stakeholder Communications*. Boca Raton, FL: Dissertation.com, 2010. 347-73. Print.
- Pinedo, Javier. "Intelectuales, Literatura Y Memoria En Chile Post-dictadura: 1990-2005." *Taller De Letras* 49 (2011): 123-39. Web.
- Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business (Twentieth Anniversary Edition)*. New York: Penguin, 2006. Print.
- Ramírez Berg, Charles. "A Crash Course on Hollywood's Latino Imagery." *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, & Resistance*. Austin, TX: Univ. of Texas, 2002. 66-86. Print.
- Rheingold, Howard. *Smart Mobs: The next Social Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2003. Print.
- Richard, Nelly. "Introducción." Introduction. *Pensar En/la Postdictadura*. Ed. Alberto Moreiras and Nelly Richard. Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2001. 9-20. Print.
- Rojas Gómez, Antonio. "Comentario de libros." Rev. of *Flores Para Un Cyborg*. *El Mercurio* [Valparaiso] 29 Mar. 1998: 18. Print.
- Rojo, Pepe. "Ruido Gris." *Yonke + Ruido Gris*. N.p.: CreateSpace Independent, 2012. 93-119. Print.
- Ross, Charlotte. "Creating the Ideal Posthuman Body? Cyborg Sex and Gender in the Work of Buzzati, Vacca, and Ammaniti." *Italica* 80.2 (2005): 222-47. Print.

- Santí, Enrico Mario. "Introducción." Introduction. *El Laberinto De La Soledad*. By Octavio Paz. 16th ed. Madrid: Cátedra, 2010. 11-132. Print.
- Sarduy, Severo. *La Simulación*. Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 1982. Print.
- Scott, Suzanne. "Fangirls in Refrigerators: The Politics of (in)visibility in Comic Book Culture." *Transformative Works and Cultures Journal, Special Edition: "Appropriating, Interpreting, and Transforming Comic Books"*. Ed. Matthew J. Costello. Organization for Transformative Works, n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2014.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985. Print.
- Seidensticker, Robert B. *Future Hype: The Myths of Technology Change*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2006. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest: With New and Updated Critical Essays and a Revised Bibliography*. Ed. Robert Woodrow Langbaum. New York: Signet Classic, 1998. Print.
- Shelton, Anne, and Daphne John. "Ethnicity, Race, and Difference: A Comparison of White, Black, and Hispanic Men's Household Time." *Men's Lives*. Ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner. 7th ed. New York: Macmillan, 2007. 408-20. Print.
- Silverman, Kaja. "Back to the Future." *Camera Obscura* 27 (1991): 108-33. Print.
- Suárez, Alicia B. "Samantha." *Primera antología de la ciencia-ficción latinoamericana*. Ed. Rodolfo Alonso. Buenos Aires: Colección Aventura, 1970. 4-6. Print.

- Springer, Claudia. "The Pleasure of the Interface." *Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs, and Cyberspace*. Ed. Jenny Wolmark. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. 34-54. Print.
- Suler, John R. *The Psychology of Cyberspace*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Rider University, 2000. Web.
- Telotte, J. P. *Replications: A Robotic History of the Science Fiction Film*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1995. Print.
- Todd, Andrew. "Eyes-On with the Oculus Rift and Our Virtual Reality Addicted Future." *Badass Digest*. Alamo Drafthouse Cinemas, 10 Mar. 2014. Web. 11 Mar. 2014.
- Trujillo Muñoz, Gabriel. "Ricardo Guzmán Wolffer: El abogado de las causas perdidas." *Biografías del futuro: La ciencia ficción mexicana y sus autores*. Mexicali, México: Universidad Autónoma De Baja California, 2000. 269-74. Print.
- Turkle, Sherry. "Connected, but Alone?" TED 2012. Long Beach. 1 Mar. 2012. *TED*. Web. 5 Mar. 2014.
- . "Epilogue (2004): Changing the Subject and Finding the Object." *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*. Cambridge (Mass.): MIT, 2005. 287-99. Print.
- Valdés, Teresa, and José Olavarría. "Ser hombre en Santiago de Chile: A pesar de todo, un mismo modelo." *Masculinidades y equidad de género en América Latina*. Santiago: FLACSO-Chile, 1998. 12-35. Print.
- Vanderbilt, Tom. "The Call of the Future." *The Wilson Quarterly* 36.2 (2012): 52-56. Web.
- Vega, Omar. "En la luna: Un bosquejo de la ciencia-ficción chilena." *Memoria Chilena*. Web. <<http://www.memoriachilena.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0036453.pdf>>.

Wayne, Teddy. "Call Waiting ... and Waiting." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 04 Jan. 2014. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.

Weiser, Mark. "The Computer for the 21st Century." *Scientific American* 265.3 (1991): 94-104. Web.

Zimmerman, Michael E. "Introduction." Introduction. *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity*. Berkeley: U of California, 1994. 1-17. Print.

Žižek, Slavoj. "Masturbation, or Sexuality in the Atonal World." *The European Graduate School*. N.p., 2008. Web. 5 Feb. 2013.

Zuboff, Shoshana. "The Information Panopticon." *In the Age of the Smart Machine: The Future of Work and Power*. New York: Basic, 1988. 315-61. Print.

Grace A. Martin

Vita

EDUCATION

University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY	
M.A., Hispanic Studies	2011
Graduate Certificate, Gender and Women's Studies	2011
Morehead State University, Morehead, KY	
Bachelor of Arts, Spanish	2007
Bachelor of Arts, Music	2007

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY	2008-2015
Graduate Teaching Assistant	
Rowan County Senior High School, Morehead, KY	2008
Instructor of Spanish	

ACADEMIC AWARDS AND HONORS

- 2013, Provost's Award for Outstanding Teaching, University of Kentucky.
- 2011, Arts and Sciences Certificate for Outstanding Teaching, University of Kentucky.
- 2010, Department of Hispanic Studies Teaching Award for Graduate Assistant.
- 2008-2015, Multiyear Graduate Fellowship, University of Kentucky.
- 2004-2007, Morehead State University Dean's List.
- 2004-2007, Morehead State University Department of Music Chair's List for Outstanding Academic Achievement.
- 2004, Morehead State University Academic Honors Award for Perfect Grade Point Average.

PUBLICATIONS

- "*Que Dios se apiade de todos nosotros*, indeed." *Polifonía* 4.1 (2014): 64- 81.